

JUDAISM

THE HOLOCAUST AND THE INTELLECTUAL

Stephen J. Whitfield

ORTHODOXY IN AMERICA: TWO ASPECTS

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JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication between Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

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JUDAISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God." From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.

The First Reader

The Intellectuals Were Slow to React

If an old epigram may be perverted, intellectuals are like other people, only more so. Automatically we expect of intellectuals a higher degree of insight, sensitivity and ethical behavior. Unfortunately, these expectations are all too often disappointed. The late Cyrus Adler once said to me, "I never believed that the higher learning is conducive to the higher morality." Nevertheless, whether or not our idols have feet of clay, we have the tendency to worship them as the repositories of greater wisdom and understanding than the generality of people.

In no muckraking mood, but with careful documentation, *Stephen J. Whitfield* discusses the minimal impact of the Holocaust on the intellectual vanguard of American Jewry in his paper, "The Holocaust and the American Jewish Intellectual." In this respect, at least, they were not very different from the masses.

The Cup Was Frequently Half Full

An unconventional approach to Jewish history is presented by *Peter Riesenber*g in his paper, "Jews in the Structure of Western Institutions." While recognizing that his view represents only a partial reading of the record, the author argues that the prevailing conception that Jewish life has been basically full of persecution and misery is one-sided and, by that token, untrue. He points out that the treatment of Jews during the 2,000 years of exile was similar to that of other weak and subject peoples, and that the catastrophes which marked Jewish experience must be seen within the context of long periods of relative peace and well-being.

In an eloquent passage, Leopold Zunz, the founder of the modern Science of Judaism, the critical and scientific study of the Jewish past, described Jewish history as a record of massive sacrifice and massive spiritual achievement. This approach, which has remained dominant, has, of course, been immeasurably reinforced by the horrors of the Holocaust. This, in spite of the protest lodged by the eminent Jewish historian, Professor Salo W. Baron, and other scholars against "the lachrymose conception of Jewish history."

Perhaps one reaction to the Riesenberg paper may be permitted. Undoubtedly the treatment meted out to Jews by their conquerors and oppressors followed a pattern that was applied to other peoples. But the crucial difference lay in the Jewish reaction to these attempts at subjugation and total destruction. The oppressors may not have been unique, but the oppressed were. Therein lies the essence of Jewish history.

Our First Ventures Into Creative Writing

In a recent issue, we announced a possible change in policy for JUDAISM that, henceforth, we would welcome poetry and fiction of artistic merit that would bear upon the general areas of concern of this journal — Jewish religion, philosophy and ethics.

We have received a great deal of material in these genres. In this issue, we share with our readers several contributions that we find interesting. *Barbara Kreiger* contributes a short story called “Blood Relations” and *Bernhard Frank* offers four translations from contemporary Hebrew poets. We hope that our readers enjoy them both.

Writing About Converts

No subject in current Jewish life arouses greater interest and passion than that of intermarriage, which inevitably raises the not inconsiderable side-issue of proselytism, the conversion of non-Jews to Judaism. To be sure, the subject of conversion has been studied by theologians, historians and sociologists, though much more remains to be done in all these areas.

The theme of conversion has, however, also appeared in literature. Taking his point of departure from the Book of Ruth and Rabbinic halakhah, *Moshe A. Moskowitz* compares the treatment of the convert in three works of modern Jewish literature. The first is Sholem Aleichem’s *Tevye*, which is concerned with the convert out of Judaism. The two others, Bernard Malamud’s *The Assistant* and the Israeli writer Yitzhak Ben-Ner’s “Kokomo” have proselytes to Judaism as their principal characters.

Who Created Whom?

One of the basic expressions of the Jewish religious genius is the Midrash. The extensive literature bearing this name is the product of a process by which religious and ethical truths are derived from familiar texts, interpreted independently of the original context in which they occur. The Midrashic method is not limited to classical Jewish literature, but operates every time we discover an insight appropriate to the human condition today in words familiar from the past.

In “Origins of Man and God: A Midrash on Genesis 1:27,” *Sidney H. Schwarz* utilizes the striking Biblical metaphor of man being created in the image of God to draw significant implications for the nature of both.

Two Faces of Orthodoxy in America

One of the most striking phenomena in American Jewish life has been the emergence and high visibility of contemporary Orthodoxy. The

spectrum is extremely wide, from the picturesque *hasid* with his *shtreiml* and *kapote*, his beard and his side locks, to the modern intellectual, be he business man, professional or academic.

Only recently has the effort been undertaken to explore the relationship among the various types in contemporary Orthodoxy and their basic *raison d'être*. In his paper, "The Ambiguous Modern Orthodox Jew," *Lawrence Kaplan* criticizes some earlier efforts in this direction and proposes his own view of the "modern Orthodox Jew."

The rise of ethnicity has been a conscious goal for various minorities in the American people. Its impact, strengthened by the sense of commitment to the State of Israel, is very noticeable in the life of the Jewish community even though the vast majority of Jews have tended to express it in concepts and ideas rather than in action.

A colorful example is afforded by several *hasidic* groups that have sought to embody their ethnic particularism not only in an individual life style but in a pattern of group existence, establishing communities, exercising political power, and militantly upholding their special goals. This phenomenon is the subject of *Jerome Mintz's* paper, "Ethnic Activism: The *Hasidic* Example."

Anti-Semitism in the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.

The Hebrew writer, *Peretz Smolenskin*, described anti-Semitism as *mastemat olam le-am olam*, "eternal hatred for an eternal people." We continue to hope that this is an exaggeration. Nonetheless, anti-Semitism is a hardy plant, difficult to uproot.

Very few people remember that, as late as 1928, a blood-libel case erupted within these United States. The place was *Massena*, a small village in the northern-most part of New York State near the *St. Lawrence River*. It is the subject of a recent volume by *Saul B. Friedman*, *The Incident At Massena*. A prominent member of that small Jewish community who has lived there all his life, *Samuel J. Jacobs*, is able to supplement and correct many details in *Friedman's* volume in his paper, "The Blood Libel Case at *Massena* — a Reminiscence and a Review."

A bizarre element in this tragic episode is that while, historically, the blood accusation generally erupted at *Pesah*, the charge being that Jews used blood in the kneading of *matzot* and in the *Seder* ritual, the ugly lie surfaced in America on the day before *Kol Nidre*. Thus, something new was added in America to this old calumny.

Soviet anti-Semitism is, unfortunately, much better known to us, but in the vast and growing literature on it all too little attention has been paid to the psychological lineaments of Soviet Jewry and the various segments within it. *Boris M. Segal*, former director of the department of psychology and psychotherapy at the *Moscow Institute of Psychiatry*, and the author of a number of books and articles in the field of psychiatry, emigrated to

the United States in 1973. In "Soviet Anti-Semitism and Soviet Jewry — A Psychological Profile," he utilizes his firsthand observations and scientific expertise to describe the Jews living under Soviet repression today.

The Tension is of the Essence

The growing body of Elie Wiesel's writings continues to interest general readers. Scholars and critics, too, have been intrigued by the levels of meaning to be found in them. In his paper, "Witness and Rebellion: The Unresolved Tension in the Works of Elie Wiesel," *Maurice Friedman* calls attention to two poles in Wiesel's thought, the Jew as a witness to God's cause and as a rebel against His justice.

The Growing Attraction of the Mystical

It is no secret that ours is an age of mounting and multiple crises. As a result, we witness a wholesale "flight from reason," with occultism, astrology, devil worship, Oriental sects, and American-grown cults proliferating on every hand. While large numbers of Jews have been drawn into these various groups, others have preferred to seek emotional release in what is surely a better choice, Jewish mysticism.

Mysticism in Judaism has been the subject of brilliant research by Gershom Scholem, his co-workers and students at the Hebrew University. It has also been the subject of treatment by many others of varying competence and integrity. In his review-essay, "Popularizing the Esoteric: Recent Studies in Jewish Mysticism," *Lawrence Fine* analyzes the current interest in Jewish mysticism and discusses several volumes that have appeared in this field.

R.G.

We regret that the last issue of JUDAISM, while correctly titled Summer 1979 on the Table of Contents page as well as on the spine and the back cover, was incorrectly labelled Spring 1979 on the front cover.

The Holocaust and the American Jewish Intellectual

STEPHEN J. WHITFIELD

THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN NO EXCEPTION to the generalization once offered, with pardonable exaggeration, by Harold Rosenberg: "For two thousand years the main energies of Jewish communities in various parts of the world have gone into the mass production of intellectuals." During the peak of Eastern European Jewish migration, at the turn of the century, the term "intellectual" was, by coincidence, imported into the American language from France, where it had characterized the defenders (often Jewish) of Captain Dreyfus. Since then, many American Jews have placed such a high value upon thought, have risen to so conspicuous a place in the learned professions, that sometimes it is as if the mind were, like the violin, a disproportionately Jewish instrument. The passionate commitment to ideas, as well as volubility and tenacity in pursuit of abstractions, have been so commonly attributed to modern Jews that Nikita Khrushchev's description of them cannot be dismissed as typical:

They are all individuals and all intellectuals. They want to talk about everything, they want to discuss everything, they want to debate everything — and they come to totally different conclusions!¹

Until the Holocaust. The murder of six million people staggered belief; its magnitude and incomprehensibility resisted efforts at description. Here, for example, is a representative statement, addressed in 1948 to an audience of literary intellectuals:

The simple eye of the camera shows us, at Belsen and Buchenwald, horrors that quite surpass Swift's powers, a vision of life turned back to its corrupted elements which is more disgusting than any that Shakespeare could contrive
...

Thus Lionel Trilling confessed a share in the failure to articulate a commensurate response, since

before what we now know the mind stops; the great psychological fact of our time which we all observe with baffled wonder and shame is that there is

1. Harold Rosenberg, *Discovering the Present: Three Decades in Art, Culture, and Politics* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 280; Khrushchev quoted in Abraham Rothberg, *The Heirs of Stalin: Dissidence and the Soviet Regime, 1953–1970* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 45.

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no possible way of responding to Belsen and Buchenwald. The activity of mind fails before the incommunicability of man's suffering.²

This loss of the power of thought has barely been rectified in the three decades since Trilling's admission. The simple unblinking eye of the camera has remained more forceful than speech, which ceased to be an essential instrument for the representation of reality. No words in our vocabulary have regained their integrity in rendering human experience intelligible when we are confronted with such torment, such depravity, such desolation. For the survivors no retribution is imaginable, no revenge adequate. For American Jews from that moment until the present, no full understanding is possible, no judgment quite satisfactory, no struggle for meaning more treacherous.

The historian of such attitudes is, therefore, confronted with a nearly insoluble task. Trained to interpret public and private documents, to locate explicit cultural positions, to translate — in retrospect — assorted means of direct communication, he finds here mostly muffled responses, fragmentary statements, stifled cries. In dealing with the impact of the Holocaust, the American historian, for once, has to learn how to decode near-silence, how to draw meaning from the extinction of feeling. In evaluating one consequence of the Holocaust, in ascertaining how and where the shocks of this calamity have been registered, in handling evidence that is elusive and impressionistic, no scholar can pretend to offer a conclusive or systematic treatment of the topic. Nevertheless, the subject of the impact of the Holocaust on American Jewish intellectuals merits attention.³

"We were living after one of the greatest and least explicable catastrophes of human history," Irving Howe wrote in his collective autobiography of the New York intellectual community. Yet "we could not claim to have adequately prepared ourselves either as intellectuals or as human beings" for the horror of genocide, for the eruption of total evil. The feelings of guilt and remorse thus aroused were, therefore, "mostly unarticulated," rarely permitted to come to the surface. Nevertheless, it is striking how rarely the memory of the Holocaust elicited direct concern and contemplation. In essays on the subject of American Jewish identity, published a decade apart by two of the most versatile and alert of American intellectuals, neither Rosenberg nor Daniel Bell made more than a passing reference to the disaster. Neither indicated that it had irrevocably affected his own or anyone else's Jewishness, that it had permanently come to haunt their lives.⁴

2. Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York: Scribner's, 1950), pp. 264-265.

3. Isaac Rosenfeld, *An Age of Enormity: Life and Writing in the Forties and Fifties* (Cleveland: World, 1962), p. 197; Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976), pp. 626-627.

4. Irving Howe, *Decline of the New* (New York: Horizon, 1970), pp. 244-245; Rosenberg,

The significance of this omission is more noticeable when we focus upon the thinker most responsible for making identity the central issue in the lives of individuals. Since Erik H. Erikson is rarely, if ever, discussed within the ambit of Jewish life, it may be especially useful to do so here, and to remind ourselves more generally of the phenomenon of "the non-Jewish Jew" anxious to repudiate his ethnic origins.⁵ Of the large number of intellectuals who have constructed often elaborate and ingenious escape routes from their own past, Erikson ought to be deemed a paradigmatic figure. As an immigrant, he has incorporated the experience of every white American or his ancestor. As an American, he is a strikingly self-made man, so intent on establishing his own identity that he used as his surname not his stepfather's but one he had chosen and bestowed upon himself. In "making a name for himself," he became his own father, thus embodying the values which de Tocqueville found so characteristic of America:

Among democratic nations . . . the woof of time is every instant broken and the track of generations effaced. . . . Democracy makes every man forget his ancestors . . . [and] throws him back forever upon himself alone . . .

Raised in Europe as a Jew by his mother and stepfather, Erikson has only the most marginal of relationships to Jewish life in the United States; and this problematic and ambiguous connection with his own origins further suggests how representative an American Jewish intellectual he is.⁶

Even when writing about the tangled roots of Hitler's childhood and about the fanaticism of the totalitarian mind, Erikson has managed to skirt a direct confrontation with the Holocaust. Even when writing about the European refugees of the 1930s, he has been evasive, noting only that "migration means cruel survival in identity terms . . . for the very cataclysms in which millions perish open up new forms of identity to the survivors."⁷ It may be no accident that his own notions of the life cycle and the eight ages of man make little, if any, allowance for the impact of catastrophes upon individual consciousness, for the possibility that sensibility may be altered under the weight of such historical disasters as the Holocaust.

It may be valuable to examine more closely the major subjects of

Discovering the Present, pp. 259-269; Daniel Bell, "Reflections on Jewish Identity," in Peter I. Rose, ed., *The Ghetto and Beyond: Essays on Jewish Life in America* (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 465-476.

5. Steven Bauman, "An Interview with Milton Himmelfarb," *Jewish Spectator*, 43 (Spring 1978): 33; Harold Weisberg, "Ideologies of American Jews," in Oscar I. Janowsky, ed., *The American Jew: A Reappraisal* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964), p. 342.

6. Erik H. Erikson, *Life History and the Historical Moment* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), pp. 27-28; Marshall Berman, "Erik Erikson: The Man Who Invented Himself," *New York Times Book Review* (March 30, 1975): 1, 3; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed., Phillips Bradley (New York: Vintage, 1945), II, p. 105.

7. Erikson, *Life History*, p. 43, and *Childhood and Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), pp. 353-357.

Erikson's own scholarly concern, the relatively young. In 1944, some of the most promising and accomplished American writers of Jewish origin participated in a symposium in the *Contemporary Jewish Record*. They included Trilling, Clement Greenberg, Isaac Rosenfeld, Muriel Rukeyser and Delmore Schwartz. The symposium was nominally on the topic of literature, but the participants were also asked to address the question of whether the awareness of the young American writer "as artist and citizen [has] been modified or changed by the revival of anti-Semitism as a powerful force in the political history of our time." It was a year after the revolt and destruction of the Warsaw ghetto; and yet they expressed no sense of urgency, no sense of obligation, as writers or as Jews, to incorporate the experience of mass murder in their depiction of human actuality. The only exception was Albert Halper, the memorialist of *Union Square*, who acknowledged that "Hitler has made me different." Halper added that "the cries of five million expiring Jews outside my window . . . beg me to tell of them, to speak for them." Not even Halper, however, took the occasion to affirm a genuine affiliation with the American Jewish community. All the symposiasts' windows were shut, so that they were unable to hear (in Trilling's phrase) "a single voice [from that community] with the note of authority — of philosophical, or poetic, or even of rhetorical, let alone of religious, authority."⁸

A generation later, *Commentary* conducted a larger symposium on the topic of "Jewishness and the Younger Intellectuals," and the pattern persisted. In his introduction, Norman Podhoretz listed the forces that might have led to some revision of Jewish self-definition since the Second World War: the eclipse of radicalism, the invigoration of religion, the emergence of Israel, the end of anti-Semitism in the public culture of the United States, and the phenomenon of "making it" into the highest realms of the economy, society and culture. Though not asked to do so by *Commentary*, only two of the thirtyone symposiasts placed any stress upon the imprint of the Holocaust on their lives. The novelist, Barbara Probst Solomon, struck a common note in acknowledging her disaffection from the main currents of minority life, yet she recalled that she most felt like a Jew "the day I saw a deserted concentration camp." The sociologist, Elihu Katz, observed among other Jews "the agony, and the guilt, of bearing witness to the destruction of European Jewry" and, as for himself, claimed to "feel strongly about remembering the Nazis. I do not see how to do this without institutionalizing personal and communal rituals of remembrance." These were fugitive thoughts, and there were a few others less decisively expressed. One of the question posed by *Commentary* dealt with attitudes toward Israel, but few of the responses related its value as an autonomous refuge to the antecedent horror of Nazism. One contributor

8. "Under Forty: A Symposium on American Literature and the Younger Generation of American Jews," *Contemporary Jewish Record*, 7 (February 1944): 4, 16, 23, 24.

put a peculiarly nasty twist on the motif of guilt by asserting that "the Jewish tradition ultimately bears some responsibility for Nazism, for the latter is Old Testament racism stood on its head."⁹

While the few contributors who made fleeting references to the Holocaust were among those most hostile to organized Jewry, it might be argued that both the 1944 and 1961 symposia were biased in their sampling in favor of universalists and against believing Jews, whose cognizance of the destruction of an entire culture and its members might be closer to the surface. But such a possibility is not borne out by the testimony of the actual adherents of Judaism. Will Herberg's existentialist *Judaism and Modern Man* (1951) opened with the statement that "horrors which only yesterday we all believed had been banished once and for all from human society . . . have come back in the most virulent form."¹⁰ But no further mention of the Holocaust was made after that introductory observation; nor, in his role as sociologist in *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (1955), did Herberg discern any influence of those events upon the religious expression of mid-century American Jewry. Such horrors apparently did not direct Jews toward the restoration of faith. But less conventional thinkers and writers than Herberg were equally unable to pursue the implications of the Holocaust, a subject almost completely avoided in JUDAISM magazine's 1961 symposium entitled "My Jewish Affirmation." The twenty-one contributors were the wise sons' counterattack against *Commentary's* wicked sons earlier that year. The participants included Robert Alter, Arthur A. Cohen and Michael Wyschogrod, who would later break their silence.

Further proof that the theologians were as baffled and stunned by the moral import of the annihilation camps as everyone else came in 1966, when *Commentary* sponsored its symposium on the condition of Jewish belief. Seymour Siegel asserted that "first and foremost, Jewish thought must try to fathom the meaning of the European holocaust. . . . For all Jews (and non-Jews as well) it remains the most agonizing question of our age." Yet it seemed a question which religious thinkers were helpless to answer, and a question which few seemed willing even to pose. Richard Rubenstein was, therefore,

amazed at the silence of contemporary Jewish theologians on this most crucial and agonizing of all Jewish issues. . . . To see any purpose in the death camps, the traditional believer is forced to regard the most demonic, anti-human explosion in all history as a meaningful expression of God's purposes. The idea is simply too obscene for me to accept.

Rubenstein predicted that "the full impact of Auschwitz has yet to be felt in Jewish theology or Jewish life. Great religious revolutions have their

9. "Jewishness and the Younger Intellectuals," *Commentary*, 31 (April 1961): 308-309. 335, 346, 355.

10. Will Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man: An Interpretation of Jewish Religion* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951), p. 3.

own periods of gestation." He added that "no religious community can endure so hideous a wound without vast inner disorders."¹¹

Over a decade later, no such disorders had wracked the American Jewish world, but, otherwise, Rubenstein's speculation has been at least partially confirmed. Some theologians have tried to come to grips with the implications of the establishment of an earthly Hell, of suffering beyond measure and devastation without purpose, of death without the traditional transfiguration of martyrdom for faith. Appreciation for the salience of the writings of Emil Fackenheim, Eliezer Berkovits, Irving Greenberg, Rubenstein and others should not go unrecorded.¹² Such thinkers have helped enlarge our terrible understanding of a universe in which, as Spinoza remarked, those who love God ought not to expect God's love in return.

Nevertheless, it is easy to form the impression that Christian thought is no less painfully seeking to confront this dreadful intervention of the demonic in history. For Christians, the Holocaust has had consequences in challenging the postulates of faith and the problematics of conduct. Among martyrs to Nazi cruelty, Dietrich Bonhoeffer may have had at least as great an effect on Christian thought as Leo Baeck has had on Judaism. The devastating indictment of the Papacy of Pius XII in *The Deputy* should not obscure the fact that a German Protestant, Rolf Hochhuth, made the Holocaust into a Christian problem more forcefully than the Holocaust has been connected to the Judaic tradition. Indeed, one proof of the power of Hochhuth's drama is that, before the New York production, an American religious organization warned of the threat to "harmonious interfaith relations." To which the drama critic, Robert Brustein, replied: "If such a cause is contingent on the suppression of truth, then we are better off without it."¹³

That a play like *The Deputy* was written in Europe is not surprising, because very few Americans have dared to tackle so awesome and auspicious a subject. No major American novelist has allowed himself to be drawn into this vortex, although — to confine the discussion to the Jews — Saul Bellow (in *Mr. Sammler's Planet*), Isaac Bashevis Singer (in *Enemies: A Love Story*) and Edward Lewis Wallant (in *The Pawnbroker*) have effectively placed protagonists who survive the Holocaust into American settings. Others, even the most ambitious, like Norman Mailer, have sensed where

11. "The State of Jewish Belief," *Commentary*, 42 (August 1966): 134, 143-144.

12. Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith after the Holocaust* (New York: KTAV, 1973); Irving Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust," in Eva Fleischner, ed., *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* (New York: KTAV, 1977), pp. 7-55; Arthur A. Cohen, "Thinking the Tremendum: Some Theological Implications of the Death-Camps" (New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1974); Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), pp. 1-58; Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Human Condition After Auschwitz* (Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1971).

13. Robert Brustein, "History as Drama," in Eric Bentley, ed., *The Storm over The Deputy* (New York: Grove, 1964), p. 24.

to stop, have known what the limits are, have grasped that Auschwitz, though historical actuality, is unimaginable and defies ready translation into artistic images. Even an historian like Lucy Dawidowicz devotes only a few brief passages in *The War Against the Jews* to the nature of the annihilation camps, for what Eugene Ionesco once said of the universe is even more applicable to the *univers concentrationnaire* — “a desert of dying shadows.” Although Lawrence Langer’s survey, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination*, makes no pretense to completeness in its analysis of the representation of atrocity, it is noteworthy that only one work written by a native American author is studied (Anthony Hecht’s poem, “More Light! More Light!”).¹⁴

Since the novel normally requires mimesis of some kind and the drama requires the re-creation of characters and setting, poetry may be the literary art least likely to falsify the experience of extreme torment. In any event, the most arresting work by a serious American writer is a poem. The lines from Sylvia Plath’s “Daddy” are no doubt familiar:

An engine, an engine
Chuffing me off like a Jew.
A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.
I began to talk like a Jew.
I think I may well be a Jew.

She was not, of course, and yet her gift for identifying the artifacts of atrocity (“A cake of soap, / A wedding ring, / A gold filling”) led George Steiner to call “Daddy”

One of the very few poems I know of, in any language, to come near the last horror. It achieves the classic act of generalization, translating a private, intolerable hurt into a code of plain statement.

Yet can a private hurt, however intolerable, be legitimately contrived to bear the freight of emotion associated with the Holocaust? Does poetic license permit personal tribulations in normal life, which led to Plath’s own suicide by gas, to be compared to an experience as radically alien as genocide? Irving Howe has answered quite rightly in the negative, arguing that no one born in Wellesley, educated at Smith, living in placid England has any reason to describe her skin (as Plath did in “Lady Lazarus”) as “bright as a Nazi lampshade/ . . . My face a featureless, fine/Jew linen.” Here emotional intensity is simply out of moral and aesthetic control; and a sensibility that sought death (for which she felt “a call”) offered, through a gratuitous act of empathy, an insult to those whose prayer for the gift of life was unanswered.¹⁵

14. Lawrence L. Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 3-8; Howe, *World of our Fathers*, pp. 451, 453-456.

15. George Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature and the Inhuman* (New York: Atheneum, 1970), pp. 301-302; Irving Howe, *The Critical Point: On Literature and Culture* (New York: Delta, 1975), pp. 163, 165-166.

This particular episode in contemporary cultural history marked an important break in the pattern of unarticulated feelings, in ending the paralysis of blunt speech. Such a break was probably inevitable, since even the arguments for the maintenance of silence had to be made as eloquently as possible; and numbness could not permanently suppress the need to communicate shock, pain and rage. Nonetheless, merely because the event is no longer regarded as unspeakable, not every writer can earn the authority that requires us to listen. Even if Plath was the wrong kind of artist to interject herself among the passive mourners, the Holocaust could not forever be blocked from consciousness in our everyday world, as though the screams of the victims were without resonance.

Especially since the 1967 war, and once more in the aftermath of the 1973 war, when Jewish fate again seemed to hang in the balance, the need to talk around — if not always about — the Holocaust has more frequently and ineluctably asserted itself. The complications and uncertainties of politics may have made private remembrance more feasible, and the treachery and corruptibility of language may have made silence preferable. But, in the last decade or so, the impulse to come to terms with the destruction of Jewish life in Europe has become explicit. Despite the decisive Israeli victories in the last two wars, anxieties about Jewish survival inevitably percolated throughout the Diaspora. In the United States, the renewed interest in ethnicity made particularism respectable. Even earlier, the Eichmann trial and the cognate uproar in Jewish intellectual circles provoked by Hannah Arendt's report from Jerusalem should also be mentioned, as well as the need to explain the Jewish fate to one's children.¹⁶

Increasingly, it seems, the radical extremity of the Holocaust has been partly absorbed in our own sense of normality, incorporated into an accepting sense of the recent past. For intellectuals and everyone else, the absolute evil of a generation ago has been kept distant for the sake of sanity, and, yet, immediacy has also been necessitated by the obligations of mourning. In the last decade, whether on television or in symposia, whether in college courses on the Holocaust or in the curricula of public schools, ordinary discourse has been expected to bear paradoxes that cannot be resolved, antinomies that cannot easily be accommodated to the American condition, which Benjamin Franklin described, without irony, as a "happy mediocrity." A nation once noteworthy for its innocence, proud of its immunity from the complicity of history, is increasingly asked to recall and comprehend the ideological murder of a million children. Those who were there and are still alive cannot be expected to relive their most unbearable years for the sake of those who are unlikely to understand. Nevertheless, survivors, bystanders and their descendants will all be torn between the need to make the Holocaust intelligible, which risks

16. Arthur Hertzberg, "A Generation Later," *Midstream*, 16 (June-July, 1970): 13.

trivialization, and the recognition of the incomprehensibility of the Holocaust, which risks oblivion.

Now that the balance is veering toward explicitness rather than muteness, a reminder may be useful that the shock of the Holocaust was there all along in the dark fantasies and subterranean fears of many of our most reflective writers. Perhaps the historian of the American mind must learn to be more resourceful and subtle in piercing the silence that long enveloped the subject. Perhaps we need a second look, for example, even at those magazine symposia which, in this respect, had seemed such forums for innocence. In his 1944 contribution to the *Contemporary Jewish Record*, Alfred Kazin had briefly mentioned "fascist cutthroats" but made no other allusion to the mass murders then being committed. Yet his new memoir dates a year earlier the beginning "of the nightmare that would bring everything else into question, that will haunt me to my last breath." *New York Jew* records the critic's "private history of the world," in which he "took down every morsel of fact and rumor relating to the murder of my people." From that moment the line-up was an essential part of Kazin's mental world:

I could imagine my father and mother, my sister and myself, our original tenement family of "small Jews," all too clearly — fuel for the flames, dying by a single flame that burned us all up at once.¹⁷

From the 1944 symposium it could not have been guessed how constant has been the pressure of the Holocaust, how forcefully it has exerted itself on the memory and imagination of one of our most influential critics.

In the 1961 *Commentary* symposium, Robert Jay Lifton, an American-born psychiatrist best known for his studies of the psyches of Asians, mentioned Nazism in passing. Nevertheless, a decade later, in the introduction to a book dedicated to Erikson, Lifton claimed that "being a Jew is very much part" of the equipment that he brings to his professional interest

and has a great deal to do with my concerns with dislocations and survivals, and with man in history in general. My writing about Hiroshima is affected, and I hope informed, by my relationship as a Jew to the Nazi persecutions — and my comparison of the two holocausts [Nazi and nuclear] becomes an imperative personal task as well as a logical intellectual one.

It may be dubious to bracket together Hiroshima and Treblinka because of "the unmanageable dimensions of technological violence, the absurd or disconnected deaths, and . . . a particularly intense form of creative guilt." The differences of motive and purpose restrict Lifton's parallel. Nevertheless, it is honorable to acknowledge that intellectual preoccupations

17. Kazin in "Under Forty:" 10, "The Heart of World;" in Fleischner, ed., *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?*, pp. 65-72, and *New York Jew* (New York: Knopf, 1978). pp. 26, 34.

have been permanently scarred by the extermination of one's fellow Jews.¹⁸

And in the 1961 JUDAISM Symposium, Michael Wyschogrod shared in the general silence. Since then he has emerged as a cogent critic of Emil Fackenheim's famous "eleventh commandment" to preserve Jewish identity in order to deprive Hitler of a posthumous victory. Wyschogrod has argued that

if I remain a Jew basically to frustrate Hitler's design, I place Hitler's evil design at the heart of Jewish faith. It does not belong there. . . . The holocaust, (he added), cannot be made to yield a new lease on life for Judaism.

Obedience to ten commandments — or to 613 — is challenging enough without having to transform the memory of destruction into a force for renewal. But it would also be erroneous if this desolation of our community were removed from Judaic thought, since the most severe questions about God's justice and mercy cannot so easily be suppressed. They are questions which, in the wake of this historical calamity, must be addressed. Otherwise, theology would be doomed to the luxuries of evasiveness and irrelevance. Nevertheless, Wyschogrod's position, which is shared by others, in no way can be interpreted as a sign of the muffled impact of the Nazi horror, which he escaped as a child in 1939. No one who minimized its meaning could have written:

Rarely does a week go by that I do not read or reread a book about the holocaust. The subject rarely leaves my consciousness. I believe it is the key to understanding me, should anyone be interested. . . . My personality may be explainable on quite other grounds than the holocaust. But I do not believe so.¹⁹

Other intellectuals testified to a similar impact. When, in 1974, JUDAISM magazine asked twenty-six academicians, writers, artists and scientists about their own stances as Jews of modernity, almost a third mentioned the Nazi atrocities. Two others, psychiatrist Harry Slochower and literary critic Frederick Garber, insisted that the Holocaust was crucial to their awareness of themselves. While the hopes of the party of humanity had not been entirely blasted, the refuge of cosmopolitanism or of homogenization had come to appear less promising.²⁰

But, since any exploration of this topic must not be restricted to those affiliated with organized Jewry, it would be appropriate to insist that the

18. Robert Jay Lifton, *History and Human Survival* (New York: Vintage, 1971), pp. 19-20, 195-207.

19. Michael Wyschogrod, "Some Theological Reflections on the Holocaust," in Lucy Y. Steinitz and David M. Szony, eds., *Living After the Holocaust: Reflections by the Post-War Generation in America* (New York: Bloch, 1976), pp. 65-66, 67; Wyschogrod, "Faith and the Holocaust," JUDAISM, 20 (Summer 1971): 286-294; Jacob Neusner, "The Implications of the Holocaust," *Journal of Religion*, 53 (July 1973): 293-308.

20. "Where Do I Stand Now? — A Symposium," JUDAISM, 23, (Fall 1974): 414, 415, 463.

influence of the Holocaust can be detected well outside the precincts of institutional and even personal affirmation. Norman Mailer, for example, has been a conspicuously non-Jewish Jew who, at one time at least, masqueraded as a white Negro. In his 1957 essay of that title, he attempted to explain some of the character transformations emerging from the underside of American society. In championing these altered identities, Mailer noted

the psychic havoc of the concentration camps and the atom bomb upon the unconscious mind of almost everyone alive in these years. . . . We have been forced to live with the suppressed knowledge that the smallest facets of our personality or the most minor projection of our ideas . . . could mean . . . that we might still be doomed to die as a cipher in some vast statistical operation in which our teeth would be counted, and our hair would be saved, but our death itself would be unknown, unhonored, and unremarked.

Few American Jewish intellectuals offered an equally hospitable welcome to the death-defying hipster, which only proves the aptness of Khrushchev's complaint that Jews come to "totally different conclusions." But the historian of the impact of the camps on American Jewry will have to look in places as wayward and personal as Mailer's essay.²¹

A final example suggests the dimensions of the subject. Trilling's earlier notation on the power of photographs to show absolute and unprecedented evil echoes in a meditation on the silent art by another, younger American unconnected to normative Jewish life. For the Holocaust seeps even into Susan Sontag's recent book *On Photography*.

One's first encounter with the photographic inventory of ultimate horror is a kind of revelation, (she wrote). For me, it was photographs of Bergen-Belsen and Dachau which I came across by chance in a bookstore in Santa Monica in July 1945. Nothing I have seen — in photography or in real life — ever cut me as sharply, deeply, instantaneously. Indeed, it seems plausible for me to divide my life into two parts . . . I was twelve, (Sontag recalled. She knew that) [t]hey were only photographs — of an event I had scarcely heard of and could do nothing to affect, of suffering I could hardly imagine and could do nothing to relieve. When I looked at those photographs, something broke. Some limit had been reached, and not only that of horror; I felt irrevocably grieved, wounded, but a part of my feeling started to tighten; something went dead; something is still crying.²²

21. Norman Mailer, *Advertisements for Myself* (New York: Putnam's 1959), p. 338.

22. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1977), pp. 19-20; Hertzberg, "A Generation Later:" 9.

Jews in the Structure of Western Institutions

PETER RIESENBERG

JUST THREE YEARS AGO, A DISTINGUISHED Israeli historian wrote as follows:

Accordingly their (Christianity and Islam) persecution and humiliation of the Jews were acts of deliberate policy . . . thus the fate of unabating persecution was chosen by the overwhelming majority of the Jews. . . .¹

The author of these words is not some historical popularizer intent on catering to conventional sentiment, but a distinguished professor at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the editor of the recent, massive *History of the Jewish People* to which several of his equally learned colleagues contributed. In his words we see a Jewish historian carried along not only by science, but also by sentiment. I use the phrase "Jewish historian" as I would use the phrase "Christian philosopher," that is, to describe one who has not only a commitment to his discipline, but, also, a commitment — a prior and more important one — to a truth or principle or entity above and beyond that discipline.

It is easy to understand why this particular view of an unabating Jewish misery persists through the ages. There has been extensive and dramatic persecution of the Jews throughout history, and anti-Semitism is one of the oldest identifiable social attitudes or prejudices in the western tradition. Moreover, in the last century, in the more or less immediate experience of all who write about Jewish subjects, first the Czarist and then the massive Nazi assault on the Jews have quite understandably colored views of earlier relations between Jews and other peoples. Indeed, a variety of negative experiences over the long-run development of Jewish consciousness has played an important role in stimulating Jews to an awareness of their identity and in creating an almost instinctive assumption that what has recently been horrible has always been that way. My belief is that these ideas have come to obscure contrary evidence about the quality of Jewish life. I will try to discard the black Hitlerian lenses and see

1. H.H. Ben Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1976) pp. 385-386. The author of this article, it should be noted, received his training in Western European Medieval history. Until he was asked a few years ago to present a course in ancient and medieval Jewish history, his teaching for almost 25 years, to say nothing of his research, was in the history of the Latin Christian West, most specifically its social and institutional history. The interpretation of Jewish history presented here is, therefore, made from the viewpoint of one essentially an outsider, who has attempted to examine the unique Jewish historical experience as he would the experience of any people.

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the Jewish experience somewhat differently. My basic position is that the Jewish experience was not very different from that of other small peoples, and that, indeed, the Jews were remarkably, and almost uniquely, successful in preserving their identity, adapting to a great variety of environments, and in attaining a high level of material, moral, and intellectual achievement.

To understand this phenomenon, one must appreciate some of the basic social and legal structures that lasted from pagan antiquity until the French Revolution and, indeed, in some ways, into the twentieth century. Until the advent and development of the unitary nation state in the last 175 years, the Western World created, and operated through, a whole body of institutions that were remarkably constant over time and space. These regulated the relationships between a central government, invariably founded on a religious base, and disparate groups, peoples, regions, and cities that survived within its political boundaries. The Jews, over a very long period, were one such people. Their history is unique, but is also comparable to that of other idiosyncratic peoples. Their similarity to others will be stressed in this article, as will two other facts: First, although, at times, legislation and popular feeling hurt them, in the course of their long history among larger, different, and more powerful peoples, the Jews were remarkably successful. That is, a surprising proportion of them were comfortable, if not rich, by contemporary standards and owed their material success not only to performance in some economic field, but, also, to distinction in government, science, and culture. Second, the Jews are similar to other groups in having been hurt badly and repeatedly but not steadily. What gives the appearance of constant oppression is the very length of Jewish history, the absence of extensive historical data for much of that 4000 year span and a myopic approach. Looking back over that long period we can see, with our eyes that have been recently sensitized by the Czars and Hitler — my code-words for modern oppression of the Jews — a succession of dramatic moments: the Destruction of the Temple, Masada, the massacres of the First Crusade, the expulsion of the Jews from England and France, the expulsion from Spain. We forget that about 660 years separate the Destruction from Masada, that the First Crusade came more than 1000 years after Masada, the expulsions from England and France 200 years after that, and the final expulsion from Spain after another 200 years. When we stop to think about it, length of time, like length of line, become foreshortened. We forget that 74 or 200 years were as long in past periods as they appear in more recent history. If it is necessary to mark the terrible years, it is necessary, also, to take cognizance of the long realities between them. Jewish history — any history — is not only the great events, the peaks, it is also the long normalcies, the valleys. We cannot discard those periods when little happened — no great tragedies — beyond the ordinary activity of day-to-day existence.

The ancient world knew countless peoples; new ones are still being discovered: Greeks, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Romans, Hittites, Jews. For thousands of years before Christianity, these people worked and traded with each other. In so doing, they developed many practices, for example — institutions for handling subject peoples, relating to alien gods while maintaining allegiance to their own, limiting the life of resident foreigners (aliens), and disposing of captives. Egyptians, Persians, Macedonians and, eventually, Romans all faced such problems of rulership and developed working institutional solutions, while Jews, Greeks, Armenians and other “small peoples” faced problems of survival and identity, some of which they solved through the operation of their own specialized institutions.

The inclusion of the Romans is significant. They, of course, are the link between the pagan millenia and the almost 2000 years of Christian history. To say this is to emphasize continuity, from Cyrus to early modern Europe, in the way that major states handled minor peoples. Properly, one should say “major religious states,” for every government to which Jewish communities had to relate was a “confessional state.” That is, it had a formal official religion; citizenship, in any sense, normally depended on membership in an established church. Until very recently, religious toleration has been a rare luxury for governments. Rulers slept better knowing that *all* of their subjects were educated in, and presumably conformed to, a single morality. Only when they replaced religious belief with political ideology have they permitted freedom of religion.

It is against this background that I wish to discuss certain practices and institutions by which the Jews were persecuted and abused. In what follows, I wish to show that what happened to them was normally what happened to groups like them. This is not to bless such nasty history; it is to understand it.

First, consider the transplantation of the Jews as an entire people. Between 597 and 586 B.C.E., the Jews were transplanted to Babylon, and their temple and life in Jerusalem were destroyed. What happened to them happened also to Hittites, Greeks, Manichaeans and Nestorians. After the Conquest, the Arabs moved Medina’s Jewish population. It is clear that state-directed movement of a population from its traditional homeland to another, possibly destructive, area was a standard practice. What the Soviets have done in the twentieth century is to use an ancient technique that conquerors were already using thousands of years before the Common Era. The subjected people was left with its culture and society but was moved out of a familiar homeland that might offer some basis for future political activity. Under the Persians, Romans, and medieval French Kings, the Jews were handled not by some new technique invented to hurt them, but, rather, according to the conqueror’s existing procedures for the limitation of danger.

A similar interpretation may be given to a related institution, expulsion, which also was just one more procedure or technique in the pre-

modern armory of political-economic-religious warfare. For hundreds of years, in the city-state world of Italy, political and social revolution were commonplace. After each upheaval or coup d'état, the losers were exiled; their property was confiscated and sold to the winners; their names were effaced, so to speak, from public memory; and, in some cases, their city palaces were leveled to the ground — a very dramatic and symbolic act. Dante is the most famous medieval exile, but there were thousands. The issue that precipitated exile could be political, as in the case of Guelf-Ghibelline rivalries; it could be the kind of family hate made famous by Shakespeare: Montague vs. Capulet; it could be economic: one banking clan achieving the ruin of its rival.

To the argument that the Jews were expelled for reasons that differ from these, one may answer "yes, but." There existed in the Mediterranean world during the middle ages a "civic religion," an intense patriotism complete with totemic symbols, banners, spiritual auxiliaries and carefully stimulated hatred. Could religious animosity, except at isolated peak moments, be any more violent than that produced by such devices? Dante tells us how the Arbia ran red with the blood of Florentines who were slain on its banks by their ancient rivals, the Sieneese. When the Visconti finally conquered in Milan, they exposed their defeated rivals in cages in the central square, there to die in public humiliation. When the Genoese defeated the Pisan fleet in a battle that determined economic control of the Western Mediterranean, they packed all Pisan males off to Genoa, thus eliminating a generation and more of maritime rivals. And, by the mid-thirteenth century, France and England had begun their rivalry; their rulers and poets were already stimulating the hatred that prevailed almost up to World War I.

Was religious animosity directed towards the Jews more frightful than that which political or economic rivals directed against each other? To be sure, it differed in intent, but could it be different in severity, in human effect? I do not know how one quantifies intensity of hatred. The Jews were expelled, humiliated, mistreated and, on occasion, massacred. But, on occasion, so was everyone else in that world of competing states, economies and religions. During the Reformation things were worse: 125 years of savage religious warfare that ranged from Scotland to Timor.

Despite efforts to bring harmony and peace, war and violence flourished against the outsider who might be the knight in the next valley, the merchant in the next town, the family on the next block. One *can* say that this xenophobia was exacerbated when religion was involved and not only when the Jewish faith was involved. During the extended contact of the West with the Byzantine Empire during two centuries of Crusades, great hatred developed between Latin and Orthodox Christians as Rome and Constantinople diverged from each other in doctrine and ecclesiastical organization. The evidence is that each cooperated with the Moslems against the other. In South France, antipathy toward heretics was so

intense that a formal crusade was preached by Innocent III. Procedures of torture and interrogation eventually used against the Jews in that area and in Iberia were first developed by the mendicants for use against the heretics — errant Christians. All this is to say that anti-Semitic violence is to be placed in a context of xenophobia and religious intolerance. There are just so many forms that persecution can take. Non-Jews as well as Jews experienced them all.

The question next arises: were the Jews always expelled because of religion or were they, at times, persecuted for conventional reasons, such as economic ones? Although religious feeling certainly was involved, it is possible to indicate other motivations by examining what happened to the Italians. After the Jews had been expelled, Italians replaced them as financiers to the English Crown. In the mid-1330s, King Edward defaulted, rejected pressure from both Italian city governments and the Papacy to pay his debts, and expelled the Italian money-lenders. The Italians had served a royal purpose and could now be dispensed with.

In effect, this is what had happened to the Jews some forty years earlier after a long period of similar service. From 1066 to their expulsion in 1291 they had served as financial resources and experts to the English monarchy and a source of money for the baronage, to say nothing of many monasteries whose very chalices were in pawn to the Jews. At one time, the famous Aaron of York owned more movable property than did any single man in England; a few thousand Jews owned about one-third of the movable property in all England. Given the wealth of this group and the needs of the monarchy, it is not surprising that the Jews were tolerated, used, and then expelled. By the 1290s they could be; as we have seen, Edward I had come to rely on Italians and, by then, much of the Jews' wealth had been taken. Magna Carta reveals that, long before the expulsion, the monarchy was doing everything possible to exploit *every* source of income. In the course of the thirteenth century, towns and knights, as well as the Jews, were brought into a more efficient fiscal system. This story is well known; it is part of the history of Parliament which, from its beginning, was involved in taxation. Another story is not well known: the history of royal administration. It is no exaggeration to say that the English Government expanded and became more efficient in the thirteenth century as it faced the problem of how to govern and tax the Jews *efficiently*. It created the Exchequer of the Jews, with branches all over England to register Jewish contracts, collect Jewish taxes, and supervise Jewish inheritances.

The expulsion from Spain may be seen in a similar light. There, as in England, the Jews had been a small but rich and influential group long before 1492. By the late middle ages, aggressive Christian bourgeoisie and nobility viewed them as both political and economic competitors. In the swells of mendicant propaganda there were constant rumors of their secret connections and actual influence. Moreover, the monarchy was

disturbed by their separatedness. In assessing royal motivation one must never forget that, after more than a century of civil war and social chaos, Ferdinand and Isabella were attempting to create a modern kingdom. All across Europe, after long periods of similarly disruptive conditions, monarchs were making early versions of the modern state. Everywhere they tried to suppress fractious nobles, dissident towns and regional law courts. Edward VII represents this effort in English history, Louis XII and Charles VIII in French. In the Papacy, Martin V is the "new monarch" as he deflects the conciliar movement.

In Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella were only being up-to-date when they crushed heresy with the Inquisition and sought political union on the basis of religious homogeneity. Creation of an internal harmony and peace was prerequisite for military and political action on the European scene. The "Catholic Monarchs" were in an ideal situation. The traditional theory of religious uniformity favored them; moreover, they had an entire armory of procedures, ranging from interrogation to torture to execution, to rid the community of any source of contamination. In the early thirteenth century, Church and State had developed the Inquisition out of pre-existing institutions; now, in the late fifteenth century, when the homogeneity of society was again threatened on a significant scale, the Inquisition was re-established as a distinctively Iberian institution. Its target included Christian heretics and Jews, many of whom, perversely, continued to resist conversion even after a century of very intensive missionary effort. Ferdinand and Isabella wanted only what other aggressive fifteenth-century monarchs wanted and were getting without such great difficulties: obedience and conformity.

In the light of the events that shortly followed the expulsion of Jews (and Moslems) in the 1490s, Ferdinand and Isabella must be seen as perspicacious. Luther began to preach in 1517. Between 1520 and 1555 the first of a series of religious wars convulsed central Europe. By expelling those who worshipped differently, Ferdinand and Isabella achieved, in effect, the principle of public law that was finally embodied in the Peace of Augsburg of 1555, that the ruler might legitimately establish the nature of religious belief and worship for his people. When they called themselves the "Catholic Monarchs" they understood belief in Catholic dogma and more. They demanded membership in a Catholic society, too — made such by baptism, education, and sincere belief as evidenced in regular religious practice. They wanted Jews and Moslems to blend in, to lose any affiliation with false and hostile faiths and mores. Social theorists of the period were aware that state strength is based on social commitments that go beyond the religious.

Examination of the Jews' expulsion from France will reveal one more instance of the general situation: in France, as in England, Spain and elsewhere, the Jews were persecuted or expelled only after the services which they had performed had been taken over either by other foreigners

or by natives frequently “trained” over generations by Jews. In France, as elsewhere, the Jews had been granted privileges by the King and the other great nobles in return for economic services. By about 1300, Christian economic attitudes and institutions had matured, and Jews were no longer as necessary as they had been. They no longer were performing those nurturing activities for which they had, in a sense, contracted. Indeed, their continued presence was now an obstacle to Christian mercantile and banking success. They were, therefore, exiled — but, then, quite quickly invited to return when the monarchy discovered that it could not do without them.

My point in this discussion of England, Spain and France is to demonstrate that other than religious considerations played a role in determining what life was accorded to Jews by Christian authorities. In all three cases, hundred of years of relatively stable acceptance preceded a single violent moment of upheaval. Jewish life was, in a sense, *very* secure, given the quality of royal and imperial protection, it was *very insecure* once that powerful auspices no longer existed.

This situation, it should be noted, is congruent with one of the most basic social patterns of medieval life: the concept of protection and privilege in return for service. Priests, teachers, women, monks, guild members — one could go on. Membership in each category conferred the benefits of some special, legally recognized status in return for something which that society needed: prayer, learning, children, goods. When Christians did what French Jews did, the basic condition for their acceptance vanished. A few years after their expulsion as a community, the Jews were invited to return, but declined. By that time they were doing for central and eastern Europe what, in the previous two hundred years, they had done for the West: acting as instructors, risk-takers and pioneers.

Another institution that is usually regarded as a specifically anti-Semitic one is the ghetto. In fact, it, too, was part of conventional practice in the management of sub-groups within a larger “national” culture or society.

There were, in antiquity, especially in the centuries after the death of Alexander in 323 B.C.E., many dispersed peoples, not only Jews, but communities from greater Greece, Asia Minor, and other regions. The Mediterranean was a trading unit then, and it was quite normal for Syrians to be living in Marseilles or Sicily and for “Italians” to be resident in Alexandria. In such cosmopolitan cities of this trade world as Corinth, Antioch, Alexandria, there were “ethnic neighborhoods.” These were formed by “nationals” living away from home who wanted to be with their own kind, with whom they shared common diet, language, gossip and trading information. They *voluntarily* associated. Invariably, such groups were held together by traditional cult practices brought from some homeland. In a large city like Alexandria, there were dozens of these groups,

worshipping native deities such as the Syrian Magna Mater and the Persian Mithras.

The larger ones might even be recognized by the city government as self-governing for certain purposes, and for these the Greek public law of the day had a term: *politeuma*. It is important to realize that the *politeuma*, a community based on social and religious ties and largely governed by its own leaders, pre-exists that movement in Jewish history known as the Diaspora. When the Jews scattered throughout the Hellenistic world that stretched from Gibraltar to the Hindu Kush, they fit in, and were fit into, this functioning system that permitted and facilitated survival far from one's native supporting institutions. During the Roman period, this situation continued.

Socially, then, Jewish sub-communities, like other small groups, were afforded protection by pagan governments. They were also similar in that some Jews, especially those of the upper trading, professional and bureaucratic classes, claimed — and were granted — citizenship, first that of the Hellenistic city-state, eventually that of the Roman Empire. This fact was of enormous significance in Jewish history, for, when in 212 C.E., the Emperor Caracalla made all free men in the Empire *cives romani*, the Jews of the Diaspora benefited from this grant. At that moment they received the protection of the Roman Law for their persons and their property, a condition that survived beyond the Middle Ages and the Renaissance into modern times in most areas in which Roman Law continued as the basis of organized life — parts of Spain, France and most of Italy. As a result of the Imperial edict, they could buy, sell, travel, receive the protection of the police and the courts, marry, educate, worship, be buried and leave wills.

It is true that, at times, their rights were circumscribed. Almost invariably, except at the highest circles, they were socially disparaged; at times, their religious freedom was stolen or limited, and there were innumerable humiliations. They did, in fact, become second-class *cives romani*. But when and where this happened, it happened in violation of the basic civil law and, when appreciated as a violation, was often corrected. Whether it was — or was not — was determined, in every case, by the nature of the relationship then existing between the Jewish community and (usually) local public officials.

However, one cannot say that, from antiquity on, the Jews lived in communities only because a congenial legal structure existed and allowed their social needs. Given their special liturgical, dietary and educational requirements, the Jews always wanted a community. If some Jews always lived among gentiles out of personal preference or occupational necessity, the majority chose to live within a Jewish quarter, a community large enough for the support of a bath, synagogue, butcher shop, and other needed institutions.

I use the term "Jewish quarter," which is favored by the very learned student of medieval French Jewry, Bernhard Blumenkranz, who chooses

this designation to avoid all of the modern associations with the word "ghetto." Throughout most of the middle ages, Jews lived in such quarters, not because the law forced them to, but because the law granted the freedom of community existence to all groups foreign to the indigenous society.

Like other foreigners, the Jews were allowed some measure of community and self-government: a physical place which provided some measure of privacy and cultural institutions, including synagogues and schools. However, they were limited in law and discriminated against in taxes and punishments vis à vis local citizens; and, in time of conflict, they were suspect, as were all whose identity was not conceived in terms of total commitment.

Our problem is to accept the existence of a complicated situation. For, if, along with other strangers, they were regarded as partial citizens, a few of the responsibilities that they were permitted to exercise were extremely important: they served in some public offices, in the armed forces, paid taxes, and maintained, if necessary, a section of the town wall. In other words, in a substantial way they were drawn into organic community life and were depended upon in times of crisis.

Idiosyncrasy was something that medieval society came to live with, especially after 1100 C.E., when travel and extended residence abroad became more and more common. The result was that every medieval and Renaissance city might have many partially independent sub-populations. Bologna and Paris had thousands of students living under special academic jurisdictions. In Venice, the many northerners had their "German Quarter." In London, foreign merchants lived according to their own law in the Hanse. In papal Avignon, during the fourteenth century, there were communities of Genoese and Florentines. Each little city group worshipped in its own church and was governed, largely, by its own elected or appointed officials. The Jewish quarter did ultimately develop into the ghetto with all of its negative associations, but, originally, it was a spontaneous, voluntary, social-legal institution that grew out of Jewish community size and needs *and* the practices of the surrounding gentile world. Eventually, the Jewish quarter became a walled enclosure, and the Jewish community inside was both protected and limited by the walls. After 1100, Jewish life throughout Western Europe was threatened more frequently than before, but not everywhere and not always, as my survey of benign conditions was intended to suggest.

This leads me to the last of the Jewish situations or conditions I wish to discuss: the precariousness or instability of their life, its dependence on good times, good will, good leadership in government. For a variety of reasons, Jewish life was more subject to caprice than was that of most sub-communities. Repeated crises in politics, war and public health frequently drove governments to sudden forced taxation. Never in adequate control of their people, rulers often acted, or failed to act, in response to

popular hatred that could be actualized by the fanciful story of a wild child, or the impassioned sermon of an itinerant preacher. Generally, we must remember that the volatile uneducated masses were in the vast majority, and the religious intensity of Europe increases, not decreases, as we approach Luther and the Reformation.

But, to make my point now about the precariousness of life in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: if life for all but a tiny privileged and wealthy few was touch and go, the Jews experienced an extra dimension and chance of uncertainty. In addition to plague, war and economic competition, they always faced that religious animosity which could take so many forms. As we look back upon their situation with eyes that have seen so much more history and horror, our first inclination is to see the fragility of their lives as both extraordinary and special. However, putting aside the occasional religiously stimulated oppression, one wonders whether their condition differed significantly from that of others who were not born into secure strata of society. Then, most peasants and townsmen looked at the Jews with some envy since then, as now, successful Jews were apparently a large and visible proportion of all Jews.

If one part of my argument is that Jews suffered much as others did in a poor and brutal world, another is that, all things considered, Jews fared rather well when not the objects of special abuse, which was most of the time. I have already alluded to the economic success of the Jewish community in England. If one looks elsewhere, similar achievement is visible. That is not to say that every Jew was a millionaire during the Middle Ages. It is to say that we have a lot of evidence to show that, across Europe and, for centuries, Jews were relatively well off because they took risks and had skills that frequently were in advance of those of their Christian counterparts. They managed for long periods both to pay for protection to the Gentile authorities and to maintain personal and community life at a decent level of material well-being.

For example, in Provence, Jewish communities flourished at Perpignan, Narbonne and other cities during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Besides secular philosophers, Talmudists, poets and philologists, we know of the existence of active business communities. Registers of Perpignan containing thousands of late 13th century civil acts survive, and analysis of them reveals that some 350 Jews were engaged in business relationships, mostly banking, with Perpignan Christians. The Chief Rabbi appears in contracts 31 times as a moneylender. The local poet also appears. In effect, the Jews constituted the principal source of investment capital for what was then a booming little city. Jewish wills and dowries reflect substantial wealth. It is estimated that Jewish family income was about £ 1200, which, for then, was an enormous sum. However, it may be that Perpignan, something of a frontier town, was a special case; artisan Jews, whose income would have been much smaller, were not attracted there.

In Northern France, during the centuries of rural pacification and settlement, the situation was much the same. In this area, where the feudal lord was the critical public authority whose protection the Jewish community needed, the Jews worked closely with the landlord class. Well into the thirteenth century, the alliance between Jew and landlord flourished; the Jew helped to “bank” the development of North French society that has ever since been one of the richest and most advanced of Western Europe. Here, as in the South and, contemporaneously, in Central and Eastern Germany, the Jew was a pioneer. We tend to think of him as a city person. To be sure, he was, but the cities of his activity were tiny by modern definition, and often he stood between urban and rural societies. Throughout the Ile de France and Champagne he lived among Christians, there being too few Jews in any given village or town to constitute a formal community, and to enjoy good relations with them.

Here, as elsewhere, when gentile mobs cried out against the Jews, they were angry at the Jews as moneylenders, not primarily as Jews, people of another religion. All money-lenders were abused. Certainly, the end result often was violent animosity towards the Jews. The question is, was this anti-Semitism or a more generalized antipathy for all agents of economic oppression? I think it was the latter. This scattered North French Jewry was, as a body, so successful that, eventually, the monarchy bickered with the local nobility to achieve its control. Ultimately, in France as in England, the monarchy was forced to institute a special bureaucracy to administer the Jews. So close were the Jews to the King that, when persecuted by wildcat mobs, their leaders could go straight to him for protection.

In the course of the thirteenth century, Jews fared badly as a group in Northern France, yet individual bankers and merchants maintained good relations with the King and his nobles. Just how wealthy Jews were, in this period, is under scholarly debate and study. We do know that, as late as 1220, the Jewish community in Champagne was assessed £ 70,000 for 5 years, £ 14,000 a year. Its decline is suggested by another statistic: an assessment of £ 521 by 1258. But, by then, the Jews’ “role” was accomplished; they had financed the commercial agricultural expansion of yet another feudal region and taught business skills to its society. French money-lenders were not on the scene, as were the “Lombards” who, in 1258, were assessed £ 20,000.

In England, where they arrived with William the Conqueror, the Jews acted from the beginning as fiscal agents whose job it was to inventory and exploit a conquered territory. Spread out from London, from Bristol to York to Cambridge, we again find them in close association with landowners of every rank. In return for their services they received privileges. Henry I (1100–1135) gave his Jews a charter which was the essential guarantor of Jewish life for almost two hundred years. It promised them freedom of movement, relief from ordinary taxation, the

protection of royal justice, guarantee of fair trial and permission to retain land taken as security on loan.

The Jews were very successful in England in the twelfth century. We have notice of some local nastiness, but incidents were rare. So free was that country of anti-Semitic feeling that it became a place of refuge for French and German Jews under stress. Like their co-religionists in France, English Jews took Christian names and social customs. Some not only became farmers, but were granted royal manors. Indeed, it was only by a very close decision that Jews were kept from exercising Knight service in this period.

But even without extensive personal land holdings, Jews became wealthy. The fabulous Aaron of York never received a royal manor but, in the twenty years, 1166–1185, he became perhaps the wealthiest man in England. He had business agents in seventeen counties, debtors in twenty-five. Nine Cistercian abbeys were in his debt, as were two of the country's greatest cathedrals. When he died, monies owed him came to a sum roughly equivalent to two thirds the normal royal income for a year, and it took four to five years after his death for the Crown to collect his debts. No other Jews were as wealthy, but many were successful, so much so that, as seen, a special branch of the government was established to monitor and tax their business activities. In the thirteenth century, their success faltered as the government taxed, taxed and taxed; yet, apparently, there was something considerable to tax until the expulsion in 1290.

As we have seen, the condition of the Jews in France and England during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries depended, in large part, on the need of society for their skills and resources. It also varied with respect to the position of the Church, which, itself, depended on many factors such as the nature of immediate papal policy and the special set of relationships that existed between a community and its local Jewish population.

By the beginning of the thirteenth century, Christianity was in crisis. Whole areas, important regions like Northern Italy and Southern France, were falling into heresy and under the control of heretic churchmen. To some theologians, what was even more important was the universal decline in the quality of Christian life, especially in the booming cities. At the University of Paris, a succession of great moral theologians conceptualized and preached against materialism. They saw Europe wealthier than ever before, falling into avarice, gluttony, sloth, love of the flesh. St. Francis' movement was one reaction to this materialism. So, too, were heresies and movements for Reform. The actions taken against usurers — Christians and Jewish — constituted another.

My point here again is that the Jews were caught up in another Crusade, so to speak, that was not initially, or even primarily, directed against them. Stimulated by preachers, popular animosity was directed against all usurers (the taking of any interest constituted usury). The Jews

were in banking; therefore, they, too, were vilified and abused. The theologians' animosity was directed against all materialism. The Jews were in business, in part because agriculture, though not forbidden to them, was precarious; and, in part, because, at the moment of Europe's economic revival, out of their long experience in the Eastern Mediterranean, they almost alone had the skills, international know-how, education and capital with which to nurture the West. That is why they were attacked by Christian moralists, as were Christian merchants and bankers who had learned their business from the Jews.

What was at stake for the moral theologians was the salvation of Christian society, and to understand their fear we must understand some of the assumptions which they made about that society. Heretics and Jews were viewed in terms that suggest a medical analogy. As bearers of false doctrines, they were seen as viruses, as potential causes of plague, disaster. From this followed various attempts to limit their hurt to the body social. The very fact that normally they walked on the streets in ordinary Christian clothes, speaking Christian vernacular languages in their dealings with Christian merchants, giving their children gentile names, made them all the more dangerous. This very fact of their integration, of their normalcy, so to speak, makes it easy for us to understand why, eventually, the Jews were drawn within another convention of medieval society.

Dress was one device by which medieval society differentiated among persons and spoke its values. Priests wore skirts; nobles wore pants and armor. Students and professors wore special caps and gowns. Merchants affected a certain uniform: furred mantles and hats. To bear arms was to proclaim one's noble status; while the color of the religious' habit — grey, white, black — proclaimed his order, as it does today. My point is that to put a star, circle or other emblem on the Jew was to declare his singularity, his specialness. Like everyone else in society, he was given his badge, his position was regularized. The badge advertised the benefits and limitations derived from his legal status at the same time that it subjected him to the quarantine effect demanded by his place in the conceptual framework of Christianity. Clearly, the medieval world was not one in which freedom was tolerated. Distinctions throughout society were carefully drawn. Like everyone else, the Jew had to be tagged and codified. Incidentally, it is by no means certain that Jews were actually forced to wear the special insignia. Laws on this matter were issued and reissued, which suggests non-compliance and, in normal times, official acceptance, of that non-compliance.

My conclusion is that from the Hellenistic period to the Renaissance, the Jews, for all we have come to believe, did not fare badly. As members of a privileged *politeuma*, as Roman citizens, or under the special protection of the Popes, Emperors, knights and nobles, they were granted legal benefits that enabled them to do business, run their communities, be successful. What they suffered from most, I believe, was heightened

insecurity in an already insecure age. Were a mob to be inspired by some fanatical preacher, the authorities could do just so much to protect them. Even medieval rulers, on occasion, had to respect the will of the masses.

My argument is that, most of the time, mobs were inactive and rulers preferred to work with Jewish communities rather than against them. The question arises, then: what do we emphasize and accept as the primary situation? Those many days and years during which, at peace, the Jew traded, doctored, studied and otherwise lived a happy and successful life? or those relatively few short and dramatic periods in which he was attacked, exiled, hurt? Few men and women were not abused by some agency in those days. As a small people, the Jews survived with remarkable success.

This is the way I prefer to see their history to the Renaissance — without, that is, lenses colored by the horrible events of modern history. I prefer to see the Jew laboring against the special, but not extraordinary, limitations placed on him in those days — and being remarkably successful. Jewish history can still be Jewish history without over-emphasis on misery, persecution and special suffering. My purpose is not to deny Jewish suffering or the constructive role that memory, and even exaggeration of this suffering, has played over the past 2000 years of Jewish history. It is, rather, to make contemporary Jews more aware and, indeed, proud than they have been, of their long history of successful adaptation, survival and creation throughout the world. In the midst of every kind of society they have largely maintained their own identity and esprit, and have contributed to many gentile civilizations while advancing their own.

Blood Relations

BARBARA KREIGER

TREE-LINED SHOSHANA STREET BENDS through Kiryat Moshe, an old neighborhood located across the wadi from The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Its small houses and larger apartment buildings were all built from white blocks of stone hewn from the surrounding hills, but that was over fifty years ago for most of the structures, and the stones are now shades of yellow and beige. A side street, Shoshana does not carry much traffic, as the numbers six and eighteen buses draw a half circle around it, but there is always the sound of children, as the grade school is located here, midway, where the street bends by the grocery.

Run by a querulous old man who frequently short-changes me, the grocery is little more than a room on the ground floor of a two-family house. I live behind and beneath it, in a basement apartment. Equipped with a recently acquired B.A. and a conversational knowledge of Hebrew, I arrived last week, a few months after graduating from college in upstate New York. I had studied literature and for many years wrote short stories. But the gap between what I dreamed of writing and what I actually produced was so great that, with cultivated equanimity, I decided, when I graduated, to stop writing fiction for a few years. Instead, I would see how I fared as a journalist (a foreign correspondent, I say to myself half-seriously), for I am bent on discovering some aspect of life in Israel which will yield a special insight to me and result in a publishable article.

But, because my intention is to make a life here for myself, the first thing I had to do was find a place to live. While apartment-hunting, I stayed at a French convent in the Old City. Knowing that flats are hard to come by, I was planning to be there indefinitely. But I was uncommonly lucky to find my own place, and am so elated that I hardly mind living in a cellar (made over into an apartment by the addition of a cot, a table, hot plate, toilet, sink, and shower stall) through which cockroaches and assorted exotic insects stroll. My door opens onto a lovely yard, with cacti and small trees. I read outside every morning and, at night, watch as the darkness seeps into my garden, while a multitude of stars are revealed. There are many such nights, for it is early September, and winter is still two months away.

Today, as always, I woke at seven, chose a book from my meager library (for the next few days it will be *Henderson the Rain King*, rather than *The Tin Drum*, as I had planned; I am in an American mood), and went

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outside to read. I will not begin job-hunting for a few more days, until after Yom Kippur. Instead, I go for long exploratory walks every afternoon. One day I take my street map, hop onto a bus, and get off at any stop that appeals to me just then. Another day I hitch out of town and hike in the hills (yesterday I discovered Lifta, a deserted Arab village whose empty, decaying houses, with their crumbled, vestigial beauty, kept me occupied until almost dark).

My eagerness to experience this city is vast, and my mood one of simple delight. But this mood is tinged with sadness this morning, for, until last week, I had never spent Rosh Hashanah alone. As a young girl I was deeply religious. And even after I ceased to dream of becoming a rabbi (when my own rabbi explained to me, as gently and delicately as he could, that women were not allowed to be rabbis because once a month they bled and were considered at those times unclean; my eleven-year old body had not yet begun to menstruate, and I struggled to understand that soon I would be dirty), I remained for several more years conscientiously devout. But since leaving my parents' home four years ago, I have drifted away from the practices of their observant house. I found, once I was on my own, that the Jewish rituals which I knew were somehow too plain and bland for my imagination, which literature had worked on and had trained to yearn for depth and color. Practices which once moved me seemed empty; what meaning could I derive from lighting the candles in my dormitory room while my roommate dressed for a date? Nevertheless, I feel the effects of having spent in solitude what has always been a communal occasion, and I am anticipating with some melancholy the more difficult Yom Kippur. An old flutter of loneliness brushes me, and I wander pensively up to the grocery store, earlier than usual, to check my mood.

I spend the rest of the morning studying Hebrew. (Learning to read, I am struggling through A.B. Yehoshua's *Three Days and a Child*, the effect of whose special mood, I sensed, was not conveyed in the translation I had read some time ago; I am determined, in spite of its difficulty, to read two or three pages a day.) In the afternoon, I search for Beit Agron, the press building to which I will go, on the day after Yom Kippur, in the hope of securing work. I will present myself in the press office as a capable young woman, a patient observer and not a bad writer; I am sure they will find an assignment for me, or some way to take advantage of my enthusiasm and high hopes. I can hardly conceive of being turned away. At night I eat alone (boiled rice and cauliflower), read another fifty pages of *Henderson*, and go to bed early. A dreary existence, some might say; but, for me, it is the necessary solitude which prepares one for significant events and useful work.

My studying is interrupted the next morning by a voice calling my name from the street. I call back that I am in the yard below and recognize Tamar, a ten-year old girl who lives across the street, whom I met the

other day in the grocery. Skipping down the path, she is followed by a girl who looks about my age. Tamar introduces her sister Batya, and they join me on the ground under a tree.

"Here," Batya hands me a plate, "my mother made these for you." Steam rises as she uncovers the dish. I marvel at the aroma, to which she replies, "They are special Kurdish meatballs."

"Are you Kurdish?" I ask.

"Yes," she answers proudly. "You know about Kurds?"

"Not very much," I regret my ignorance. "But wait, let me get some forks so you can share these with me." I realize as soon as I say it that I have only one fork, but I am saved from embarrassment by Batya's insisting that the meatballs are for my dinner.

For the rest of the morning, we sit under the tree and talk about Kurdish life, in Iraq and in Israel. Batya tells me about her grandparents, who came on donkeys from Kurdistan at the beginning of the century and settled in Jerusalem, living side by side with Arabs and raising thirteen children (not counting the two who died in infancy) in one room. Sometimes I have to ask her to speak more slowly; often I have to ask her to stop in order to look up a word she has used. From time to time Tamar, competing for my attention, interrupts. "Hey, man," she says in thickly accented English, "you have a light?" She feigns toughness, assuming the pose of a gangster. As they are leaving, Batya asks me if I will join her family the next evening. I accept happily, but I don't understand what it is they're to do. She is in a hurry, as she has to help her mother prepare dinner, and doesn't have time to explain; all I catch, as she and Tamar head up the path, is that it has to do with chickens. Anyway, they will come for me at six o'clock, and I eagerly anticipate my first real outing. Now, I sense with proud elation, my life in Jerusalem is really beginning.

The next evening, however, the appointed hour arrives and passes. Overcome by dejection as another forty-five minutes go by, I put up some water to boil rice which, along with a tomato and cucumber, will serve as my dinner. Just then, I hear Tamar calling from the door.

"Nu?" she inquires abruptly. "What are you doing? It's time to go."

Nonplussed, I turn off the hot plate and grab a sweater. As we climb the path, I say, "I thought you forgot. You said six o'clock."

She shrugs with charming insouciance. "Six, seven, what's the difference? Kurdish time."

Across the street, we join Batya and Hannah, their mother. She is a large, beautiful woman, dark like her daughters, dressed rather elegantly. I thank her for the meatballs, which I ate last night.

"Why haven't you come to dinner?" she asks, as if I had refused an invitation.

Feeling at fault, I fumble for words. "I don't know. I didn't know I was supposed to. Thank you. I'd like to. I will."

We climb into their new, white Mercedes (I am surprised to see such

an expensive car; later I learn that it is the father's medallion taxi cab as well as the family car) and wait for Amnon, the teen-aged brother, and Saleh, the father, to come down from the house. I am startled to hear loud squawks, as the two appear from around the corner carrying by the legs several large, fluttering chickens. Batya notices my expression and, remembering my ignorance, laughs, telling her mother that I don't know what they are doing. Saleh, a short, broad, one-armed man (the other arm lost in Israel's first war) with a huge, flashing smile on his dark, handsome face, opens the trunk, into which he and the boy toss the loudly complaining birds. They climb into the car, and Saleh, grinning, says to me succinctly, "Now we are ready!" And we speed off in the direction of town.

I am not able to follow their conversation; they speak much too quickly, and their Eastern accent, if I am correct in calling it that — with many of the sounds originating in the throat — is very different — more guttural, Arabic-sounding — from the sound of the Hebrew to which I am accustomed. They speak loudly, often gesturing (my heart skips as Saleh takes his hand off the wheel in order to punctuate a point), but gradually, squashed in the back seat between Batya and Amnon (Tamar is on his lap), I find that I have grown completely relaxed with these Jews, whose manners are as foreign to me as I imagine any could be. Batya has by now taken the time to explain to me that what we are doing is some kind of ritual performed between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, though I still have no idea where the chickens come in. But I look forward with great eagerness to experiencing their customs. And, more than that, I have an intuition that maybe among these dark, handsome, Oriental Jews I will recover the intensity of religious feeling which I associate with my childhood, when every prayer, every gesture — from passing the spice box at the end of the Sabbath to searching for leaven before Passover — confirmed the connection that I felt with all Jewish history.

We drive to Maḥaneh Yehudah, an old district of cramped dwellings and narrow alleys, where the open market is located.

"My grandparents raised their family in this neighborhood and still live here," Batya explains to me. "It is the Kurdish neighborhood, though not all the Kurds live here now. One day soon we will come to visit my grandparents."

We park the car in a steeply-inclined alley and climb out. Saleh and Amnon grab the chickens by the legs, and we set off on foot. I still have only a vague idea of what is happening; my curiosity and anticipation are overwhelming. I imagine that we look like an odd crew as we hike through the darkening, cramped streets — Saleh in his open shirt, Hannah in an elegant dress with jewelry, the kids in jeans, and me in a skirt and blouse — our prisoners loudly and vigorously protesting. I am wearing the wrong shoes for this hike, especially since some of the alleyways, having been washed down already for the night, are wet. I slip and almost fall. Batya apologizes for rushing; she is trying to keep up with her father. We slow

down a bit; I am grateful for a chance to appreciate the market. The alleys are lined with vegetable and fruit carts, the smell of fresh citrus is heavy in the evening air; the small open shops are lined with everything from huge sacks of grains to pans filled with cheeses, from brightly colored plastic and net shopping sacks to sweaters, cowboy boots, and jeans. Late as it is getting, people are still strolling, bargaining, hollering. Each produce stand has a scale; at one, the burly, bearded owner tosses brass weights into one pan and grapefruits into the other. The woman he is serving complains about his price, and he begs her, with mournful eyes and theatrical gestures, not to give him problems. We weave our way among the hagglers and finally reach a more secluded alley, with fewer stands and no shoppers. We pass one shop — it is really more a stall than a shop — which catches my eye. The floor is covered with a thick carpet of white feathers and, in the corner, buried to their waists in a heap of them, two old women sit on the floor. Their braids long, their heads kerchiefed, they are plucking feathers from a pile of chickens which surrounds them. Fascinated, I go closer to watch, but they wave me away with annoyed cackles.

“Come on,” calls Batya, “I don’t want to lose sight of my father.”

I hurry along with her and am aware suddenly that a remarkable and total silence has descended on us, as if we were taken under the heavy, soft wing of a great bird. This stillness is disturbed only by the clacking sound of our shoes. Sensitive to some quality in the air, I make an effort to walk more softly. Then, in the distance, I hear a lone voice chanting, the intonation of what I take to be a rabbi. By now we have caught up with Batya’s family. “This way!” Saleh blithely guides us around the corners, and I am aware not only of the chant, but also of a crowd’s chatter as the prayer is concluded. The mixed sounds become more distinct and, when we round a final bend, I see a large group of people and, above them, perched on a crate, a stocky, dark-haired, beardless man. Dressed in street clothes, a yarmulke on his head, a bloody knife between his teeth, he has a live chicken by the legs and is swinging the squawking bird in wide circles above the kerchiefed head of an old woman standing bowed below him. After a few circles, he stops. Awestruck, I watch as he takes the knife from his teeth and, while intoning what sounds like a prayer, deftly slits the chicken’s throat. Blood spills down his arm and, when the bleeding is done, he hands the sacrificed fowl to the woman whom he has apparently blessed. She moves off; the next person in line hands him a chicken, and the ceremony is repeated.

My friends have already taken their places at the outer edge of the crowd, not realizing that I have halted. Now Batya returns for me, concerned. “Are you afraid?” she asks solicitously.

I am not sure, but I answer no. “I was just very surprised. I have never seen anything like this before.”

“Come,” she urges, “I’ll explain it all to you as we stand in line.”

I go with her, and we join her family. I am slightly dazed. The combination of the bloody knife gleaming between the man's teeth and his chant — which to me sounds beseeching — is stranger than anything I have ever encountered. There is something oddly atavistic about it, and I am momentarily disoriented.

"This is *kapparot*," Batya begins. "That is the word you did not understand. Our sins are put onto the chickens, so that we are purified in the new year. You give the *shohet* your chicken, and he blesses you, saying, 'This chicken is your substitute, your redemption; it will be killed, and you will have a happy and peaceful life.'"

"Each person has a chicken?" I ask.

"Sometimes, and sometimes a family will have one together."

"But what will you do with five chickens?"

Batya laughs at my ignorance. "There is another custom which we observe. Because no Jew should go without a full meal before the fast of Yom Kippur, whoever can afford it gives chickens to poor families. My father will give three of ours away, as he does each year."

Meanwhile, we have been inching nearer to the *shohet*. Saleh turns to me. "Nu? How do you like the *kapparot*?" he asks, knowing I am unfamiliar with the practice.

"There's a lot of blood," I try to say casually so as not to appear overly squeamish, which I am.

"And do you want a chicken?" He is evidently amused at my discomfiture.

"Me?" I don't know if he is serious and am afraid of being rude. "Maybe next year."

He laughs and turns his attention to the dark figure on the crate. I may be uneasy, but I am deeply impressed by the scene I am witnessing. My upbringing, observant as it was, was — how should I put it — non-literal. And I struggle to identify what I am now witnessing as part of the refined and civilized Judaism that I know. Is my disorientation only evidence of how out of touch I am with my past? Anyway, what strikes me now is how rich, how alive this observance is. This is Judaism as the law dictates, a powerful drama before my eyes.

But I am isolated by it, lost for the moment amidst this new reality next to which Western Jewish practice, at least as I know it, pales. We used to give to charity before Yom Kippur, dollars replacing chickens as we outgrew our ancient manners. Why the symbolism? In the name of progress? After all, this business here is rather crude. Convenience? Decorum, maybe? For where would we swing our chickens — on the corner of Oak Street and Union Street, with our Christian neighbors peering from behind closed drapes? Among our Eastern brothers, who have none of the discretion which, over the years, was built into small town Jewish living in America (which is all I know), there is no such disguise. The law says that you sacrifice a chicken, and it is done.

I feel suddenly rootless. Where do I belong? I, who can't even watch a chicken's throat being slit. I feel linked to all this. I am moved, but confused; the connection I feel is a deeply Eastern one. My feelings are for *these* Jews — dark, foreign, their second language Arabic, whose families have never, in generations, been west of Tel Aviv, whose people came on donkeys across the desert, who swing chickens and slit their throats. I do not know what to make of it all. I feel strangely homeless, lost in the gap between what I have known and what I now perceive. My gaze has been slowly drifting up to the figure, still chanting, on the crate. I want to watch, to participate. But the swinging chicken, the bloodied hands — they leave me strangely lonely. Details stand out to my fatigued eyes — the *shohet's* blood-spattered shirt, his soaked hands, the red stains on his lips and chin, the chicken's glazed eyes and taut neck. I feel lightheaded. The dizzying route of the condemned creature is reenacted in my swirling head, and the strange, compelling chant is lost in my own internal din. I do want to watch, to participate. I force myself to focus on the dark figure. My legs are weak. I need to escape, to sit down. But the crowd is pressing me on, urging me closer. I resist in spite of myself, but I am weak. The *shohet's* eyes gleam in the semi-dark. There is no way out but to pass by him. Now it is our turn. Five chickens and I am free. I am sweating, my legs tremble, my head pounds, my stomach is churning. My resolve is gone, my wish to participate vanished. I turn as the knife is raised, breathe several times deeply, allow my eyelids to lie closed. What I wanted to achieve could not, perhaps, be accomplished in the course of one night. I need more time.

Intermarriage and the Proselyte: A Jewish View

MOSHE A. MOSKOWITZ

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE QUESTIONS of intermarriage and proselytization are current and relevant to anyone interested in American Jewish survival. Figures showing a declining birth rate, population dispersal, and generational change may be equally, if not more, significant to the issue, yet the intimate and emotionally charged nature of both intermarriage and proselytization enhances their interest for us since they deal with individual matters of sexual choice, family relationships, and personal conscience. They are also problems which have accompanied the Jews throughout history and may be traced back to the concept of the Jew not only as an Israelite but also as an *ivri*, i.e., "alien" or "foreigner" and, thus, subject to the vicissitudes and seductions of the host society.¹

With regard to intermarriage, it is important to note that sociologists use this term not only to refer to a marriage between persons of different religious, social, or ethnic backgrounds, but also apply it in those instances where one partner has already assumed a full religious and cultural identification with the spouse. This is a point which should be taken into consideration when speaking about the rising rate of intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles, particularly in view of the role that the proselyte may play in such a marriage.²

The concept of *ger*, a proselyte, or formal convert to Judaism, is of equal significance in the continuing history of the Jewish community. In its original context, *ger* referred to a foreign-born alien who sought to cast his lot with the early Hebrews. In Phoenician, the term referred to a "client" or "sojourner" of a foreign nationality who joined the Phoenicians and placed himself under the protection of their divinity. It appeared in such names as *Ger-Astoret*, "Client of Astarte;" *Ger-Ba'al*, "Client of Ba'al;" *Ger-Hekhal*, "Client of the temple," etc.³ That the Bible also had in mind this aspect of *ger* may be seen from the concise and emphatic admonition in Leviticus (19:34):

1. Julian Lewy, "Origin and Signification of the Biblical Term 'Hebrew,'" *Hebrew Union College Annual*, Vol. XXVIII, 1977, pp. 1-13.

2. Some sociologists advocate the use of different terms to mark this distinction. Cf. Arnold Schwartz, "Intermarriage in the United States," in *The Jew in American Society*, ed. Marshall Sklare (New York: Behrman House Inc., 1974), pp. 308-309. As yet, however, there is no standard terminology. See also Sidney Goldstein, "American Jewry, 1970 — A Demographic Profile," in Sklare, p. 119.

3. Julian Lewy, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

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When a stranger (*ger*) resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I the Lord am your God.

When one examines Jewish literature in general to see how it treats the themes of intermarriage and the proselyte, one becomes aware of a certain ambivalence which has persisted through the centuries. Such cases of ambivalence usually reflect the conditions or circumstances in which a particular Jewish community found itself at the time.

For example, not only is there the statement from Leviticus quoted above, but the Bible also lists a series of peoples with whom fraternization and marriage are forbidden. Further, when Moses admonishes the Hebrews to treat the proselyte kindly, it is not only because they themselves were once the alien people, but also because he, himself, was once a *ger* and has himself, in fact, married a foreign woman. Yet there are also the harsh decrees of Ezra and Nehemiah, who "cleanse" the Jewish community of foreign "elements," including wives and children.⁴ These latter steps, of course, must also be seen in their historical context, since, when they were taken, the cultural decadence of the Jews had reached the level where they "could no longer speak the language of Judah."⁵

Intermarriage and the proselyte were also themes which were very much on the minds of the Talmudic sages. Direct and continual contacts with divergent peoples, the dynamic force of Hellenism with its inducements, and the pre-Constantinian tolerance of certain Roman emperors brought about a physical and spiritual expansion of Judaism, a feeling of universalism and a missionary zeal hitherto unknown in the Jewish community.⁶ It is in this spirit that one can perhaps appreciate the Talmudic statement that the Jews were exiled for the express purpose of collecting proselytes.⁷ Although a certain number of proselytes had always been a regular appendage to the larger Jewish communities, this population increased greatly when large numbers of Alexandrian Greeks and Roman heathens were attracted to the mores and customs of the Jews. Yet, though the Rabbis provided for the acceptance of proselytes, they expressed second thoughts concerning their character and fitness, and inclusion in the Jewish community became contingent upon certain qualifications and rites. One also finds, for the first time, a certain preoccupation with the question of sincerity.

There is, for example, the Talmudic discussion as to whether those who desire to become proselytes out of love for a Jew or Jewess or from

4. *Exodus* 2:22; *Nehemiah* 13:29-30; *Ezra* 10:1-17. For the list of nations with whom fraternization and marriage were forbidden, see *Deuteronomy* 7:1-3, 23:4.

5. *Nehemiah* 13:24.

6. Salo Wittmayer Baron, *The Jewish Community* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1942), Vol. I, pp. 75-111.

7. *Pesahim* 87b.

8. *Yerushalmi Kiddushin* IV, 65b; *Yevamot* 24b.

some material motive are to be accepted.⁸ Though the halakhah indicates that they are to be received into the community, nevertheless, the differences of opinion are themselves worthy of note, for they reveal a concern with the motives of the proselyte. This concern is discernible in the established rules requiring that the proselyte be informed of the difficulties inherent in Jewish existence, i.e., the persecutions, sufferings and punishments for transgressions. He is also informed that the world to come is only for the "righteous," and if he assents to these, he is circumcised and bathed ritually. Only then is he regarded as an "Israelite."⁹ Although there is a rare statement by one Rabbi that "Proselytes are as hard for Israel as leprosy,"¹⁰ the Talmud and the Midrashim generally follow the lead of the Bible in emphasizing not only the acceptance of, but also kindness toward and love for, the *ger*.

It is not the intent of this essay, however, to give an overview of the literature on the subject, but to discuss a few select works that have the themes of intermarriage and/or the proselyte at their core. More specifically, we are interested in these themes as they come to expression within the framework of the Jewish storyteller's art. For this purpose, we have chosen works by four authors who excel in the art of storytelling: the Biblical writer of the Book of Ruth, the Yiddish author and humorist Sholom Aleichem, the American Jewish writer Bernard Malamud, and the Israeli author Yitzhak Ben-Ner. The writings of the last two, since they are of a more contemporary nature, will receive the greater emphasis.

The Book of Ruth

Notwithstanding scholarly argument as to the precise purposes of this book, there is little disagreement as to the beauty and completeness of its form.¹¹ Utilizing the tone of the patriarchal narratives, the author tells how a young widow sacrifices her home, family, religion, and burial among her own people to follow the people and God of a destitute and aged widow. Ruth, a Moabite woman, marries into the family of Elimelech, the Hebrew. When both her father-in-law and her husband die, she is given the choice of returning to her own people or following her mother-in-law, Naomi, to the land of Judah, where the famine is now over and "the Lord had cared for his people and given them food."¹² Warned by Naomi that if she casts her lot with the Hebrews and goes home with her she faces a life of bitter hopelessness, Ruth nevertheless pronounces the famous words, "Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God."¹³ With these

9. *Yevamot* 47a-b.

10. *Ibid.*

11. For a discussion of these possible purposes, see the commentary by John Gray on *Ruth*, in *The New Century Bible* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1967), pp. 400 ff.

12. *Ruth* 1:6.

13. *Ibid.*, 1:16.

touching and simple words, the Biblical author poetically sweeps away any negative aspect that might adhere to the image of Ruth as an ideal proselyte who harvests not only a strong Jewish husband (Bo-az) and a new family, but also royal lineage.

Thus we have Ruth, a Moabite woman, with whom contact is expressly forbidden,¹⁴ extolled as a model proselyte, who by her simple piety and loyalty to the Jewish community, rehabilitates a family and merits ancestry in the Davidic dynasty. Nevertheless, all is not as it seems to be. According to certain legends, Elimelech, Ruth's father-in-law, originally opposed her marriage to his son.¹⁵ In other legends, there are discussions as to whether Ruth has properly converted before marrying.¹⁶ Although Ruth's character is generally blameless, she is of such extraordinary beauty that no man can look at her without becoming passionately aroused, and her mother-in-law fears that she is leading an immoral life.¹⁷ As to her new husband, Boaz, he is an octogenarian and dies in the bridal chamber, perhaps as punishment for having married a Moabite woman.¹⁸ Such Rabbinic embellishments may be said to reflect a continuing ambivalent preoccupation with the problems of intermarriage and the proselyte, both in the light of established precedent and in terms of the Rabbis' own experience with the problem.

Tevye and Chava

Nowhere is the feeling of ambivalence toward intermarriage more vividly and touchingly portrayed than in the writings of Sholom Aleichem. For that matter, there is no single character in all of Jewish literature who can convey, by seeming restraint, the spectrum of volatile emotions involved in the marriage of a Jew and Gentile, as well as does Tevye the Dairyman.

More than a humorous or pathetic figure, Tevye is the historical personage par excellence. The lives of Tevye and his daughters mirror both the convergence and near divergence of crucial filaments in the continuum of Jewish history. Written at the turn of the century, the Tevye stories reflect the impact of emancipation and enlightenment on the Jewish Pale of Settlement in Russia. It is an impact which is felt in every fiber of Tevye's being as he struggles to make a living and marry off his daughters in accordance with Jewish custom and ritual. It is already apparent when his first daughter, Zeitel, refuses to abide by the match he has arranged for her. It is more visible in his second daughter, Hodel, who combines love for her Jewish father with devotion to the revolution and

14. *Supra*, n. 3.

15. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1954), vol. IV, p. 31.

16. *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, pp. 188-189, n. 40.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 192, nn. 55, 57.

18. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 34; Vol. VI, p. 194, n. 69.

commitment to an exile which sunders her from all Jewish things. It is clearly perceivable in the characterization of Feferel, Hodel's husband, with his sharp-tongued attacks on the Czarist establishment and his fiery defense of the working class.

The erosive effect of the new liberty, with its release from the restraint of tradition and its disenfranchisement with Jewish law and lore, is most clearly felt, however, in the episode involving the third daughter, Chava. Not only does Chava read the literature of the enlightenment, as does Hodel; not only does she fall in love with a secularist and free-thinker the likes of Feferel, but her emancipation leads her straight into the arms of a non-Jew, which, for a shtetl-Jew like Tevye, is the equivalent of her demise.

Wounded by his first two daughters in their choice of a mate and life style, Tevye is nevertheless reconciled and grants them his blessing, painful as that may be. His third daughter's behavior, however, very nearly obliterates him. Nor is there place here for conversion to soften the blow. Chvedye, the blonde-haired Russian, has no intention of taking courses in Judaism. Furthermore, following centuries of Jewish withdrawal and retrenchment against an enemy who appealed to man's finer instincts but frequently obeyed his basest, Tevye is in no position to accept a proselyte gladly. When one also takes into consideration the Russian attitude toward the Jews, an attitude which insists upon oscillating between limited malevolence and outright cruelty, Tevye's deep sense of shame and disgrace can be readily understood.

Thus, Tevye's horror at his daughter's betrayal is not based so much on the smugness of a confined spirituality, as it is on the scarring of history. It is not Tevye who is narrow-minded but his liberated daughter, for she naively believes that flashing a picture of the Russian writer Maxim Gorky — "Reb Gorky," as Tevye refers to him — can erase the bruises of a millennium and give sanction to her apostasy.

Nevertheless, rooted though he may be in tradition, Tevye understands the way of the world. Thus, he not only condemns his daughters' universalism but also seeks to understand it:

Peculiar thoughts came into my mind. What is the meaning of Jew and non-Jew? Why did God create Jews and non-Jews? And since God did create Jews and non-Jews, why should they be segregated from each other and hate each other, as though one were created by God and the other not? I regretted that I wasn't as learned as some men so that I could arrive at an answer to this riddle. . . .¹⁹

Above all, however, there is Tevye the Jewish father, and though he has relegated Chava to oblivion, compassion and benevolence at times get

19. Sholom Aleichem, *The Tevye Stories*, trans., Julius and Francis Butwin (New York: Pocket Books Inc., 1965), p. 74.

the better of him. One such moment occurs when he suddenly sees her standing before his horse and wagon, pleading to speak to him. His first inclination is to jump from the wagon and embrace her; humanity and the love of a parent for his child seem about to transcend all barriers of disgrace, rivalry, and restraint. Yet it is precisely at this moment that the pendulum of ambivalence swings the other way. Realizing that his daughter has seized the reins to prevent him from leaving, Tevye reluctantly but determinedly dismisses her. That a Jewish daughter should utilize force to attain her ends is apparently a concept so repugnant to Tevye that the golden moment is lost.

Malamud's The Assistant and Ben-Ner's "Kokomo"

Ambivalence, however, is by its very nature many-sided. Not only is it exhibited at times in the Jewish marriage partner, in his or her family, or in the Jewish community at large, but it may also be manifest in the proselyte himself as he involves himself in the possibility and process of becoming a Jew. Such an involvement and the interrelationships between a would-be proselyte and a Jewish family form the nucleus of Bernard Malamud's novel of suffering and desperation, *The Assistant*.

Set in New York City in approximately the late 1930s, *The Assistant* is a powerful study of the tragic quality of life. It paints a grim and sad portrait of the struggling but failing Jewish storekeeper, Morris Bober, his daughter Helen, who is willing to compromise her Judaism for "love," and Frank Alpine, a confused drifter, who eventually replaces the Jew by becoming one himself.

In a certain sense, Morris Bober is a humorless Tevye transplanted to America, for he, too, supports his family by selling dairy products although, unlike Tevye, he occasionally sells "a piece ham" to his Gentile customers. Bober, too, has a daughter who falls in love with a Gentile, only this Gentile is not a Russian intellectual but a dishwasher, handyman, and all-around hobo, who captivates both Bober and his daughter with his tales of woe and St. Francis.

If one follows the plot-line of *The Assistant*, one arrives at certain portentous signals. The immigrant Jew passes from the scene (at the end of the novel Morris Bober catches pneumonia and dies), his daughter, loving and dedicated but not overly exposed to Judaism, succumbs to the charms and persistence of a non-Jewish tramp, and the victorious vagrant, by dint of hard work, self-sacrifice, and a circumcision, wins both the Jewish girl and the grocery store.

Although most critics would agree as to the artistic merit of *The Assistant*, there is some question as to whether the portrait of Frank Alpine is that of a true proselyte to Judaism. Particularly problematical are both the final intent and value of the circumcision at the end of the novel: is it indeed, as one critic put it, "the ritual confirmation of the completed act of

psychic conversion"?²⁰ In the light of this questioning, Alpine's supposed regeneration via the *mohel* appears ironic and inconclusive.

Whatever else one may say about him, it would seem that at times Malamud's protagonist is genuinely touched by the concept of "Jewish suffering." He appears to give meaning to his own suffering through that of the Jews, and at the end of the novel he dons a "Jewish apron" and assumes the role of the suffering storekeeper, Morris Bober.

What remains doubtful, however, is whether Alpine's frustrations, his toiling day and night to support the storekeeper's widow and send his daughter to college, are in the true spirit of Jewish sufferings, trials, and history, or whether they represent a "fatal circle of guilt, recrimination, and failure."²¹ Specifically, Alpine's shady background, his private thoughts and secretive actions, and his relationship with Helen, the daughter, make one wonder about the moral efficacy and spiritual durability of his conversion.

Although it seems at times that a certain strength of character emanates from him, in actuality Frank's nature is weak, impulsive, and compulsive. When the story opens, he is an accomplice in the holdup and robbery of Bober's grocery. It is true that he seeks expiation by working long hours in the store, yet he steals from the cash register while doing so. He also victimizes the perplexed Bober by stealing milk and rolls, and then pleads for sympathy and understanding when discovered. He saves the daughter from rape, yet forces himself upon her, and then is filled with remorse. While it might be suggested that Alpine's redemption comes only in part through his love for Helen, and that essentially he becomes a Jew because he, too, is the symbolic sufferer, the quality of his relationship with the girl casts doubt on the entire issue. To put it bluntly, Frank seems to "endure" so that he can get into bed with Helen:

But he wouldn't try to push anything, for he had heard that these Jewish babes could be troublemakers, and he was not looking for any of that now . . . besides, he didn't want to spoil anything before it got started. There were some dames you had to wait for — for them to come to you.²²

Though he regrets the holdup and returns to the scene of the crime to make amends, it is only after he notices Helen in the store window that he makes his move. Obsessed by her provocative gait and tiny breasts, he lurks in and around the store, waiting for her like a lone wolf for its prey. Jewishness is the furthest thing from his mind: "He thought she didn't look Jewish, which was all to the good."²³

Furthermore, Frank Alpine's repentance is accompanied by an am-

20. Wm. Freedman, "From B. Malamud with Discipline and Love," in *B. Malamud: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Leslie A. Field and Joyce W. Field (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975), p. 164.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

22. Bernard Malamud, *The Assistant* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), p. 61.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

biguous brooding, and one suspects that without his hope of one day possessing the "Jewish babe," his attitude toward the Jews would remain mired in its anti-Semitic crassness:

That's what they live for, Frank thought, to suffer. And the one that has got the biggest pain in the gut and can hold onto it the longest without running to the toilet is the best Jew. No wonder they got on his nerves.²⁴

It has been argued that the aforementioned negative sentiments appear early in the novel; that Frank Alpine is honestly repentant; and that there is an ongoing growth and development of character. His leap into the grocer's grave at the end of the novel is thus viewed by some critics as the death of his old character, while his circumcision is perceived as a rebirth and initiation into the secrets of the tribe. Mythology, however, supports yet another view. As seen from this aspect, Alpine's circumcision signifies not only his bond with the Jews and their God, but it also symbolizes submission in the service of Eros.²⁵ Put another way, the circumcision implies something other than resurrection and redemption. It is the mark of Cain displaced below — the scar of the instinctual personality who has no intention of renouncing his desires but only of masking them by frequent displays of contrition.

It would also be a mistake to regard Frank's tramping about the states as an echo of the Wandering Jew, nor can his curling up in the womblike safety of the grocery store properly be regarded as a "homecoming." Frank Alpine does not truly seek the meaning of Judaism, nor does he ever evince anything but a passing interest in its tenets. That the spirit of his conversion is both questionable and superficial may be seen from a passage which occurs late in the book, at a time when one would have thought that his regenesi as a Jew would have been more imminent:

He read a book about the Jews, a short history. He had many times seen this book on one of the library shelves and had never taken it down, but one day he checked it out to satisfy his curiosity. He read the first part with interest, but after the Crusades and the Inquisition, when the Jews were having it tough, he had to force himself to keep reading. He skimmed the blood chapters but read slowly the ones about their civilization and accomplishments. He also read about the ghettos, where the half-starved, bearded prisoners spent their lives trying to figure out why they were the Chosen People. He tried to figure out why but couldn't. He couldn't finish the book and brought it back to the library.²⁶

One can perhaps find a more meaningful conversion, one which is unaccompanied by a dubious erotic undercurrent, in the recent story,

24. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

25. Cf. Peter L. Hays, "The Complex Pattern of Redemption," in *Bernard Malamud and the Critics*, ed. Leslie A. Field and Joyce W. Field (New York: N.Y. University Press, 1970), pp. 219. 233.

26. Bernard Malamud, *The Assistant*, pp. 190-191.

"Kokomo," by the Israeli author, Yitzhak Ben-Ner.²⁷

Set in Kokomo, Indiana, the story concerns Boaz Ben-Brit. This "Ben-Brit," however, born to a Scotch Presbyterian family in the heartland of America, strives earnestly to live up to his Hebrew name. Introduced to Judaism by a Jewish friend while he is serving in the Navy in World War II, Wally Kerry and his non-Jewish wife Ruth (!) decide to convert. He takes the name Boaz Ben-Brit, following the clever, if obvious, suggestion of his friend. Though it is undoubtedly his relationship with this Jewish friend which is the spur, Boaz evinces a love and dedication to things Jewish that go far beyond the suggestions and example of his friend. At times this devotion appears so idealistic as to strain the reader's belief; indeed, it evokes the scorn of certain "normal" Jewish characters within the story. Yet it is just this idealism that imparts to the story its beauty and relevance.

Whereas Frank Alpine never once mentions Israel, Boaz dreams of the day when he can settle there, and is moved to tears by the picture of Jerusalem embroidered on a synagogue curtain. Having adopted the Jewish faith, he encounters the superficial smiles and hostility of friends and family, Jews and Gentiles. Yet despite the inhospitable glances of those about him, he claims to find the essence of Judaism in its ancient prayers; it is in the Orthodox synagogue that he discovers Judaism to be more than a "slight adventure, equal to the shift of moods of man."²⁸

In Ben-Ner's story, it is this midwestern ex-goy, as American as the "Big Mac" hamburgers on which he exists, who instructs both American Jews and Israelis in the principles of faith and loyalty. Though his heavy work at an Indianapolis granary involves the possibility of physical harm and even death, Boaz persists, because he regards it as a preparation for his eventual life on a kibbutz. When his employer's secretary, a modern woman imbued with the sense of her self-worth, fails to understand Boaz's persistence, he tells her, "Certainly, Miss Burstein, you as a Jew ought to understand that better than others." The secretary, however, though ambivalent toward Boaz, views her Jewishness with a definite indifference:

A Jew! What does that matter?! Listen, mister, we live in the twentieth century. . . . So if by chance I happened to be born to parents who considered themselves Jewish, as did their parents — you think that obligates me? I am a woman, with freedom of choice and freedom of thought, and I have nothing to do with all that pagan mythology!²⁹

Out of a sense of identification with the Jews and Israel, Boaz, unlike Frank Alpine, studies Hebrew and participates in the activities of a local

27. Yitzhak Ben-Ner, "Kokomo," in *Shekiah Kofrit* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1976), pp. 72-97. The translations from the Hebrew are my own.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

Zionist group. To him, America has become an alien land, and English a foreign tongue: "This is a land of wheat and pigs," he says at one point. In the course of these activities he runs across Jonathan Perah, a shiftless Israeli, who resembles Frank Alpine more than the former Wally Kerry does. The major preoccupation of this young Israeli seems to be a relentless debasement of the Zionist dream:

You are an idiot, Boaz. . . . You think they will kiss you when you and your wife come to Israel? Bullshit. What the hell do they care if you remain a Jew or not . . . blue skies, ocean, sand, kibbutzim, boys, girls — goddamn crap! It's stupid. Listen, you think they want you there? There is not even one person who cares about other people. They will laugh at you, not help you. You will feel worse there and be more alone than here. Throw away this beautiful picture. Israel is something else. . . . It is not a nice story from the Bible, and the people are not nice people like in *Exodus* — you better know that. Otherwise, it will go very bad for you there!³⁰

This cruel dream-deflation, however, does not faze Boaz. He senses something in the youth's eyes which leads him to believe that the latter somehow retains an attachment to Israel, and thus he is willing to overlook Perah's condemnatory tirades.

Although much has been made of Frank Alpine's sufferings and passion, as has been indicated previously, it is primarily the latter which motivates him. It is to Malamud's credit as a writer that the reader nevertheless senses the palpability of Frank's distress. In Ben-Ner's short story the proselyte also suffers, but the goal is worthier.

Although sexuality in "Kokomo" is relegated to the background, it serves to enhance the protagonist's stature and enlarges the dimensions of his devotion to Judaism. It is not Boaz who is afflicted with irrepressible desires but his wife, Ruth. Yet even in her sleeping about with other men, including the very person who has introduced them to Judaism, one senses not sluttishness but the agony of illness. His wife's nymphomania and the betrayal by his Jewish friend serve only to illustrate Boaz's strength, for he offers not blame but compassion.

Furthermore, whereas Frank Alpine's efforts to learn about the Jews and their culture are only halfhearted — his identification with the Jews being expressed in overt physical acts — the sincerity and spirituality of Boaz's attachment to Judaism permeate the story from beginning to end. Thus, the story opens with the words, "I am a Jew and my heart is in Israel."

Ben-Ner's "Kokomo" rings with Biblical innuendo, Messianic longings, and the sadness of the lost son seeking his way home. It is Ishmael in Indiana, seeking a share in the ancient dream. Just as Abraham had heard the call of God, Boaz hears the voice of the Reverend Marshall on his car radio, puts on his *kippah*, and, while driving to work, recites along with him:

30. Ibid., pp. 89-90.

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great so that you will be a blessing."³¹

Boaz's personal salvation is also intrinsically tied to the Jewish community and to its ancient history. In contrast to Frank Alpine, whose Messianic vision is confined to Morris Bober's grocery store, Boaz Ben-Brit's redemption is inseparable from the Land of Israel. Yet, for him, both the modern state and its Biblical counterpart are one and the same. The goal of his toil is emigration, not fornication. As the ideal proselyte, Boaz's intercourse with the Jews is social and transcendental; it is a fusion with the entire span of Jewish history.

As can be seen from the literature reviewed above, intermarriage and proselytization have been constant concerns of the Jewish community, its leaders and authors. At those moments in history when Jewish existence was precariously vulnerable, proscription of intermarriage may have been deemed particularly necessary, and the question of a proselyte's sincerity assumed major significance. There are those who would claim that just such a situation exists today. Under such circumstances, the discouragement of intermarriage and ambivalence in accepting the proselyte would surely be understandable. Recent studies have shown, however, that today's proselyte not only adds to the growth of the Jewish population, but that he or she may contribute to the enrichment of Judaism as well.³² Thus, it may be that the quantitative losses suffered by the American Jewish community, through assimilation and intermarriage, where the parties concerned sever their link with the Jewish continuum, may be offset, in part, by the qualitative contributions of the dedicated proselyte. Certainly, Judaism has nothing to fear from the Biblical Ruths or the Walter Kerrys, or even the Frank Alpines who, having assuaged their spiritual needs and having received proper guidance, may also identify with the Jews in an earnest and responsible fashion. Sex and statistics notwithstanding, it is clear that Judaism's survival is predicated upon the sincerity of its adherents as well as their number.

31. *Genesis* 12:1-2.

32. Fred Masarik, "Rethinking the Intermarriage Crisis," *Moment*, Vol. 3, No. 7 (June 1978): 29-33; David M. Eichhorn, *Conversion to Judaism* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1965); for the latest scientific study on this subject see Egon Nayer and Carl Sheingold, *Intermarriage and the Jewish Future: A National Study in Summary* (New York: The A J Committee, Institute of Human Relations, 1979).

Origins of Man and God: A Midrash on Genesis 1:27

SIDNEY H. SCHWARTZ

TO THOSE DEVOTED TO BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP, the determination of the *p'shat* of a verse, its clear and plain meaning, is a primary undertaking. Every translation is scrutinized and judged by asking how true it is to the original intention of the text. *Drash*, on the other hand, is a tool through which a multitude of interpretations may be advanced without overmuch concern with the text's original intention. The genius of *drash*, or what we call *midrash*, is that it allows for the creative expansion of ideas which remain, nevertheless, rooted in Jewish tradition by virtue of their exposition through a Biblical verse.¹

Another way to look at the unique nature of *midrash* is to characterize it as eisegesis, as opposed to the exegetical approach of *p'shat*. That is to say, instead of taking a verse and using every philological tack to understand its true meaning, we begin, instead, with an idea or a question which we then seek to elucidate by finding a verse that will provide us with a good foundation for homiletical exposition.

The utility of *midrash* for modern interpretations of Judaism should be obvious. Much of what our ancestors saw as *Torah mi'Sinai*, revealed law at Sinai, no longer carries the weight of Divine coercion for many Jews. This is not to say that these Jews do not vigorously affirm the importance of Judaism in their lives. However, their need is to find interpretations of Judaism that are modern and believable while not being totally discontinuous with Jewish tradition. *Midrash* is the ideal tool in this process, for in its relation to the Tradition it is both conservative and liberalizing. It is conservative to the extent that it keeps us within the Torah's universe of discourse and continues to tie every new idea to that cornerstone of our religion. It is liberalizing because it reminds us that a verse takes on meaning only in its civilizational context, giving us not only the license, but the obligation, to interpret it in accord with our own dictates of reason.

Since we characterized *midrash* as eisegetical, it is appropriate that we begin this particular *midrash* with a question rather than a verse. The question is: Did God create man or did man create God? We could hardly

1. There is an interesting discussion on *midrash* which puts forth the view that *p'shat* and *drash* are identical but for the fact that the former gains greater acceptance. Cf., R. Brauner, "Rabbinics and Rabbinic Education" in *Shiv'im: Essays and Studies in Honor of Ira Eisenstein*, ed., Ronald Brauner (Philadelphia: The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, 1977), p. 69.

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expect that the Biblical author would have provided us with an answer that reflects all of the knowledge and sophistication of modern science. The Bible must be accepted on its own terms, as a lofty yet primitive religious worldview. Nevertheless, Genesis 1:27 may shed considerable light on our question through its *midrash*.

"Vayivrah Elohim et ha'adam beẓalmo, bezelem Elohim baro oto . . ." The *p'shat* given by the New JPS translation is, "God created man in His image, in the image of God did He create him . . .". From this translation we derive the understanding of a human being fashioned by a supernatural God and placed on earth at God's will to inhabit God's world. However, there are many who, unable to accept such a supernatural formulation, would dismiss this verse as having nothing to say to them. The use of *midrash* on this verse, though, may allow the very same people to derive some lesson, albeit a more humanistic one, about creation from Genesis 1:27. The analysis which follows is offered in the aforementioned spirit of modern *midrash*.

Vayivrah: This word is most commonly accepted as meaning creation in the generative sense and, thus, a verb peculiarly reserved for God's supernatural power. Yet there is Scriptural support for translating the term in the sense of transformation. Evidence Psalm 51:12, "*Lev tahor be'ra li Elohim, ve'ruah nakhon ḥadesh be'kirbi*," "Transform my heart, God, that it be pure, and renew within me an upright spirit." Similarly, in Isaiah 65:18, "*borei et yerushalayim gilah*" must mean "for I transformed Jerusalem into rejoicing."² Thus, *vayivrah* here implies, not a miraculous creation, but some basic change or transformation in *adam*.

beẓalmo: The issue here is not one of literal translation as much as of grammar. Traditional translations interpret this word as "His image," that is, in the image of God. We would suggest that *beẓalmo* modifies the word *adam*, man, which immediately precedes it. This is not to suggest "creation in the image of man" but rather that, whatever is happening to *adam*, "his physical form remained unchanged."

bezelem Elohim: According to traditional translations these words begin a second segment of the sentence which, for purposes of emphasis, will repeat the notion found in the first part. We would suggest that this part of the sentence, while complementing the first, is not a reiteration. Sforno, a traditional commentator, understood this phrase to refer to the Divine spark given to man which differentiates him from the animals and allows his spirit to live beyond his mortal body. He saw the *zelem Elohim* manifest in man through his love and fear of God. Accordingly, we deny that this phrase implies the physical molding of man. The conveyed sense is, rather, that of *imitatio dei*, the molding of one's own life after the ethical model of God's attributes. The implication that such a task remains very much in the hands of man brings us to our last phrase.

2. Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Boston and N. Y.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1907) p. 135.

bara oto: First, *bara* here means neither “creation” nor “transformation” but “conception.” *Genesis Rabbah* continually compares the Divine activity of creation with the model of a king building a palace; the king conceives and orders the plan but does not do the work himself. Thus, God’s role in creating the world (*bara*) really involved laying out the plans through *Torah* and not the physical molding of every earthly being.³ Second, *oto* provides the same ambiguity as did our previous pronominal suffix. We would claim that, while God is the subject in the first part of the verse, man becomes the subject in the second. Thus, “... did man conceive,” and not “... did *He* conceive.”

In light of the above we offer the following *midrashic* translation of Genesis 1:27: “Homo was transformed by God even as his physical form remained unchanged; in accord with his highest idealization did man conceive of Him.” With such an interpretation we may now proceed to address our initial question of whether God created man, or man, God. With no intention of evasion, our answer must be “yes,” for both parts of the question have elements of truth. We suggest here a simultaneous creation of God and man by making God the actor in the first half of the verse and man the actor in the second half. Homo comes to a conception of a supreme Being and, at that moment, is transformed to man.

Philosophical anthropology seeks to determine a dividing line between the creature which we would call human and those animals that are our ancestors. A century of remarkable fossil discoveries has led to various theories on the genesis of the human species. Some speak of physical traits such as bone and spine structure or the size of the brain cavity, while others speak of social characteristics such as family organization and food-gathering techniques. All of these theories presume that man is a product of an evolutionary chain and not the object of *creatio ex nihilo*, creation from nothing, as suggested in Genesis. The question is whether such increasing scientific sophistication makes belief in the Bible obsolete.

We think not, for Genesis 1:27 may describe a symbolic moment in the history of the world during which we may say that humanity, as we know it, came into being. The second half of the verse suggests that it was man who conceived of God, but that this was probably only the culmination of a series of very profound observations. We may imagine that preceeding the conception of God was the observation of cosmos, order. There must have come a point in the evolutionary chain of the genus, homo, when mental faculties were turned away from the necessities of getting food and shelter, in whose acquisition these beings must have already become quite proficient, and toward the contemplation of what was around them. The more perceptive among them noticed that there was a certain rhythm to the world. A short cycle existed which varied light and darkness; a longer cycle varied the strength of the sun and the

3. I owe this insight to Dr. Sol Cohen.

produce of the land. Water falling from the sky nourished the earth which, in turn, provided sustenance for them. Most remarkable was the very fact of life itself, the ability of fellow creatures to reproduce their kind and create new living beings to populate the earth. All of this magnificent order must have a source and a cause, thought homo, for it was too perfect to have occurred by happenstance. The only possible explanation for the cosmos was a supreme Being who personally shaped the universe with unknowable powers and imbued life itself with purpose. Judging by the world which He brought into existence, this Being had to be both perfect and infinite. In fact, He embodied all of the marvel and wonder of the very universe which homo inhabited. Homo called this supreme Being God. Here was primitive man's "highest idealization."

Such a suggested development, however, explains only the second half of our verse and would leave the impression of a *Deus alter homo*, God in man's image. This is only half true, for just as the verse has complementary parts with God as the subject of the first half and man of the second, similarly there is a sense in which we must understand how God, in fact, "created man." Let us elucidate by employing our own translation.

"Homo was transformed by God even as his physical form remained unchanged" First we must speak to the process of transformation/creation. The term "God" here does not refer to the supernatural God of the Bible, but one should not, therefore, conclude that we are dismissing God as a factor in this process. If we may speak of the God-factor as opposed to "He," which conjures up images of a personal, supernatural Deity, we may say that God is *the* crucial criterion in the origin of man. Whether we speak of the God-factor in terms of process, power, or force, we must ultimately proclaim it to be quite real.

How does this God act? Here we come to the second point in this part of the verse — the nature of transformation. In our translation we have used the term "homo" because it is the genus common to whatever ancestor primitive man had. The second part of the verse, though, calls the same being "man." Our verse describes the point at which homo, overcome with awe at the order of the cosmos surrounding him, attributes that order to a supreme Being to whom he must pay homage. This cognition, in turn, transforms homo into homo sapiens — man with the ability to know. The very fact that he recognizes a God-factor in the universe is what makes this being human. In this sense we may see God as the creator as well as the created. This awareness of God radically transforms a primate mammal into that magnificent creature whom we know as a human being. The God-factor works no less actively in our own world, as it is only with our knowledge of God that God can be a force in our lives.

Finally, we address the part of the translation dealing with physical form. As this transformation took place we could perceive no change in the form of homo; it was, rather, a change in his soul/mind. Creation was, therefore, not a supernatural event in which man stood where once there

was dust; rather, the event was miraculous insofar as an epochal stride had been made in the development of spiritual and intellectual faculties that would civilize the world.

By understanding the verse to be in a sensitive balance between the activity of God and the activity of man, instead of an exclusive God-act, we point to a very important lesson for ourselves. *Genesis Rabbah* already points to the fact that man is a partner in creation by virtue of his completion and perfection of the things set in the world by God.⁴ From this same idea we may see that the creation of man, himself, is a joint endeavor of God and man. We are left with neither the supernatural *creatio ex nihilo* nor a totally God-less interpretation of creation which would lead to the distressing belief that man is the be-all and end-all in the universe. Instead, we suggest a spiritually-human concept of man.

One of the insights yielded through the consideration of our origins is a suggestion as to those characteristics that may be inherent in humanity, as opposed to those things that are learned through socialization. The term *homo sapiens* already suggests that knowledge is a primary way of differentiating man from his primate predecessors. The nature of this sapience is the contemplation of one's place within the cosmos. Upon the conceptualization of God, man discovers that there is order and purpose in the world. The realization that he is *bezelem Elohim* leads man to set God up as his spiritual model. Thus, he seeks to exert dominion over the natural world around him, just as God seemed to control the entire universe. More importantly, man sees his obligation to contribute to the order and purpose that God had wrought and begins to evolve basic laws of morality which can be said to be inspired by God but realized by man.

Man is *not* coterminous with God, but our verse teaches us that, just as our symbolic first human reached a consciousness of self in relation to the cosmos, so our own self-realization is intrinsically tied to our recognition of a Godly force in the universe. To make God that factor which transforms animal to man and the criterion with which we mark the start of human civilization is the declaration of *homo-religio*, religious man. To be a *homo-religio* means to strive for Godly values and to attempt to make them manifest in our lives. Therein lies the essential character of humanity.

Is this a diminution of the traditional concept of God? We hardly think so, for the implication of this *midrash* is, in fact, the antithesis of atheism. The denial of any Godly force in the universe or in one's life is not only an admission of total despair for the future of human civilization, but is indicative of a regression to a pre-sapient mentality in that being.

Zelem Elohim shaped by man, in turn transforms man into *homo-religio*. The ideal of God has been the focus of human strivings from the dawn of creation and continues to be the very purpose of human existence.

4. *Bereshit Rabbah*, 66.3.

The Ambiguous Modern Orthodox Jew

LAWRENCE KAPLAN

THE MODERN ORTHODOX JEW MAY STILL BE an unfamiliar, even exotic, figure on the American scene but, at least, he is no longer invisible. To be sure, the old image — or rather caricature — of the Orthodox Jew as a benighted, East-European figure, complete with long gaberdine, round black hat and hanging sidelocks, adrift in the spiritual world of the Middle Ages and wholly isolated from the social and intellectual currents of modernity — or various less extreme variants thereof — is still maintaining a precarious grip on the popular consciousness. Just recently, a sumptuous picture book appeared, entitled *Tradition: Orthodox Jewish Life in America*,¹ and consisting wholly of photographs of Lubavitch Hasidim in Crown Heights — a classic example of mistaking the part for the whole. Nevertheless, the old misconceptions, if not dead, are rapidly dying and, perhaps, in the not too distant future, they will finally be given the eternal rest that they so richly deserve. Already, such figures as Orthodox Jewish physicists, lawyers or law professors, politicians, advertising executives, sociologists, literary critics, bio-chemists, etc., etc., are becoming more and more frequent and, even more important, more and more visible on the American Jewish scene, and their collective presence is bound to break through even the strongest and most resistant of preconceptions.

But the features of this new, emerging modern Orthodox American Jew are as yet not clearly defined. There is something elusive, deeply ambiguous, about his whole personality, for who is this modern Orthodox Jew? We may define him as one who desires “to adhere faithfully to the beliefs, principles and traditions of Jewish law and observance without being either remote from or untouched by life in the contemporary world,” and who recognizes the mutual demands of traditional Judaism and of modernity. He may thereby be differentiated from his traditional counterpart who is “relatively more isolated from contemporary secular society,” and who sees “such aspects of reality as secular education, English language or occupations outside the Jewish community as infringements upon [his] life.”² But is the Orthodoxy of the modern Orthodox Jew, itself, in some sense modern? Does it reflect, in some significant

1. Mal Warshaw, *Tradition: Orthodox Jewish Life in America*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1976).

2. Samuel Heilman, *Synagogue Life: A Study in Symbolic Interaction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

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manner, the impact of modernity? or is his Orthodoxy identical, in all essential respects, with the Orthodoxy of his traditional Orthodox brother? Perhaps the modern Orthodox Jew simply embodies a traditional Orthodoxy co-existing uneasily with a wholly unrelated commitment to modernity. To put the question semantically, does the word “modern” in “modern Orthodox Jew” modify the adjective “Orthodox” or the noun “Jew”? Granted that the modern Orthodox Jew exists and even flourishes, is there such an entity as modern Orthodoxy?

It is ironic that these questions have been raised in a very acute form by a recent work whose clear, professed intention is to avoid such questions. *Synagogue Life*, by Samuel Heilman, a young, modern, Orthodox Jewish sociologist who is also a sociologist of the modern Orthodox Jewish community, is, as its subtitle indicates, “a study in symbolic interaction.” Its purpose is to study the “interaction generated within, and by, the members of a small modern Orthodox Jewish synagogue [Congregation Kehillat Kodesh] located in [Sprawl City] a large Northeastern American city” (p. ix), to detail what actually happens in an Orthodox synagogue and its social significance. As Heilman himself emphatically notes, his work, insofar as it focuses on “how Orthodox Jews as *social beings* [the italics are Heilman’s] act in their congregation,” will not illuminate the significance that the synagogue has for Orthodox Jews as believers, as committed religious individuals. At the outset, he states:

This is not a book about the religion of Orthodox Jews, for it explains neither their religion nor the essence of their orthodoxy (p. ix).

Indeed, we may add that, while the Orthodox Jews described in *Synagogue Life* are modern Orthodox Jews, Heilman also does not explain the essence of their modernity nor why they are committed to the demands of both modernity and Orthodoxy.

Yet, if *Synagogue Life* tells us nothing, or very little, about the essence of the Orthodoxy or of the modernity of the Jews described therein, it tells us a good deal, if not enough, about the essence of the interrelationship and interaction of their modernity and Orthodoxy. Indeed, the theme of the tension, actually, the outright conflict, between the demands of modernity and of Orthodoxy and the various strategies that modern Orthodox Jews have adopted for dealing with, or evading, this tension and conflict, emerges as the central one of the book.

II

Who, then, is the modern Orthodox Jew, this loyal and regular shul-going member of Congregation Kehillat Kodesh, as Heilman depicts him? First and foremost, to use the author’s bold image, he is, or at least sees himself as being, a criminal. The modern Orthodox Jew is, in theory, committed to meeting the demands of both modernity and Orthodoxy; however, insofar as he perceives these demands as being inherently con-

tradictory, his commitment to the demands of modernity results in his selectively violating or, at the very least, not wholly living up to the full range of the demands that Orthodoxy makes upon him. To be involved in the modern world, *ipso facto* means to live a life that involves the constant compromising of the rigorous norms of Orthodoxy, norms whose legitimacy the modern Orthodox Jew fully recognizes; in a word, it means to live a criminal existence. Moreover, this Orthodoxy which the modern Orthodox Jew sees himself as compromising, if not actually violating, is the same Orthodoxy that is shared by his traditional Orthodox brother. The Orthodoxy of the modern Orthodox Jew does not, in principle, differ from the Orthodoxy of the traditional Orthodox Jew. The only difference is one in fact; the modern Orthodox Jew in practice does not live up to the demands of the traditional Orthodoxy to which he is, in theory, committed. In this respect, the modern Orthodox Jew sees himself as being less religious than the traditional Orthodox Jew who, so the modern Orthodox Jew believes, by virtue of his being a traditional Orthodox Jew, does, by and large, adhere to these rigorous demands. As one member of Kehillat Kodesh comments, in talking of strict ritual observance, "We [members of Kehillat Kodesh] probably don't come up to specs. The Yeshivah [the local traditional Orthodox talmudic academy] probably comes closest to it."

The Orthodoxy of the modern Orthodox member of Kehillat Kodesh, insofar as it is a traditional one, does not in any way serve to allow for, or justify, his simultaneous commitment to modernity. Conversely, his modernity does not, in any way, illuminate, color, shape, affect, much less deepen, his commitment to, and understanding of, his Orthodoxy. If anything, it only lessens that commitment. Moreover, since the Orthodoxy of the Kehillat Kodesh member is essentially a traditional one, unaffected by the commitment to modernity, and since, as we have seen, the Kehillat Kodesh member feels that traditional Orthodox Jews meet the demands of that Orthodoxy better than he, he cannot fault them in terms of their Orthodoxy. The only criticism that he can make is that the traditional Orthodox are not sufficiently modern. Thus, the major complaint that the members of Kehillat Kodesh have to make about the Sprawl City Yeshivah is that "it's not so hot in English [i.e., secular studies]." More generally, they criticize it for its isolation from contemporary society. Imagine, "the kids aren't even allowed to read the *N.Y. Times*!" However, all admit that the Yeshivah is "pretty good in Jewish stuff."

In Kehillat Kodesh itself the behavior of the members conforms to traditional Orthodox patterns. Thus, the members decided to make the *mehizah*, the barrier separating men from women, so high as to satisfy even the most stringent of traditional Orthodox views. The fact that Jewish law, as interpreted by the legal authorities recognized by the modern Orthodox community, does not require so high a barrier and that, as a result

of this particular barrier, women are blocked off from the main section, i.e., the men's section, more than would otherwise be the case, does not seem to bother the synagogue powers that be — all male, naturally. Indeed, even for an Orthodox synagogue the role of women in Kehillat Kodesh seems particularly peripheral. All of the currents pushing for greater participation of women in the religious sphere do not seem to have touched Kehillat Kodesh in the slightest. There is absolutely no effort made to see how women might be given a greater role in synagogue affairs while keeping within Orthodox bounds.

It is in this light that we can perceive the significance of the fascinating phenomenon of the use of *Yenglish* or Yiddishized English in the synagogue, an English which is not only intermingled with Hebrew, Aramaic and Yiddish words but has its entire syntax altered as well. Thus, a professor of English no less, when engaged in Torah study, will come out with a phrase like, "How *medakdek* [careful] do you have to be in learning out this *posuk* [verse]?" Heilman suggests:

One might view this mix as symbolic of the mix between the parochial and the secular so characteristic of Modern Orthodox Jewishness. While the more *frum* continue to study in Hebrew, Aramaic and Yiddish and the less *frum* study primarily, if not completely, in English, these shul Jews, living at once in the modern English-speaking world and the traditional Jewish world, study in *Yenglish*, that linguistic blend which reflects their character and situation (p. 232).

Heilman's explanation is not convincing. If one will visit such bastions of traditional Orthodoxy as the Lakewood and Telshe Yeshivot, perhaps the two most prominent traditional Orthodox talmudic academies in the United States,³ one will find the students, almost all American-born, studying not in Hebrew, Aramaic or Yiddish but in *Yenglish*; the very same *Yenglish* as spoken in Kehillat Kodesh. This tends to suggest that the modern Orthodox member of Kehillat Kodesh, in speaking *Yenglish*, is acting, not surprisingly, like a traditional Orthodox Jew. The modern Orthodox Jew, when engaged in Torah study, this most Jewish of all activities, attempts to carry it out in what seems to him to be the most authentic traditional manner possible, which means, for him, imitating the manner in which Torah is studied in traditional Orthodox circles.

Thus, the synagogue for the members of Kehillat Kodesh is not, as Heilman suggests, "a crossroads between the contemporary world and the traditional Jewish one." Rather, it is a place where the modern Orthodox Jew may temporarily shed his self-perceived illegitimate modern identity and be able to act in a wholly (holly?) traditional Orthodox style.

To be sure, the members of Kehillat Kodesh do attempt, at times, to create some type of significant interaction between their modernity and their Orthodoxy. Heilman thus describes the process of "contemporization," i.e., "the explanation, exemplification, and elaboration of Torah

3. See David Singer, "The Yeshivah World," *Commentary* (October, 1976).

material in present-day terms" that takes place during Torah study. However, the examples suggest that this attempt is, at best, fitful and superficial. Heilman relates one instance when a member suggested that a particular halakhic principle was similar to one outlined in a recent state supreme court decision. Despite the fact that "the reference aroused a great deal of interest and discussion, even causing digression from the original text," in the end "the [supreme court] case seemed to have very little, if anything, in common with the principle stated in the Talmud text under study." There seems to be no attempt to utilize modern scholarship or modern categories of thought in any systematic fashion to explicate and illuminate sacred traditional texts.

It is not surprising, then, that the state of co-existence between the components of modernity and of Orthodoxy within the modern Orthodox Jew is exceedingly fragile and tenuous. He is engaged in a precarious balancing act and he is very careful lest anything upset it. He takes care to avoid, and evade, any issue which might directly challenge the logic or illogic of his dual commitment. During one study session, a Kehillat Kodesh member asked a question regarding an apparent contradiction in the Biblical description of the exodus. Now, this problem of contradictions in the Biblical text automatically raises the spectre of the documentary hypothesis which explains duplications, divergences and contradictions in the Pentateuch by claiming that it consists of different literary sources which were woven together over the course of time by means of a complex, extended redactional process. However, while all types of answers were suggested by members of the study group to resolve the original problem, all were of an harmonizing nature and the whole issue of the documentary hypothesis, which would appear to contradict the traditional belief in the unitary nature and Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, was passed over in silence. Certainly members of the study group are familiar with the documentary hypothesis. Nevertheless, it would seem that even to speak of the hypothesis is felt to be too disturbing and threatening a course of action to take. For this would raise the more general problem of the challenges and difficulties posed by modern Biblical scholarship to traditional Jewish scholarship and, by implication, the challenges and difficulties posed by modern, critical, historical study of sacred texts to traditional belief — indeed, it would raise the whole question of the possible discordance existing between modernity and Orthodoxy. And the members of Kehillat Kodesh who have never worked out for themselves any coherent ideology to justify their dual commitment to both modernity and Orthodoxy are totally unprepared to face that challenge — and they know it! Therefore, they take especial care to prevent the problem from arising in the first place.

This course of evasion and suppression underlies a good deal of synagogue activity. As Heilman suggests,

a psycho-theological explanation may be offered for the incessant joking

and gossip that constitute shul conversation. The “light” chatter of sociability, almost compulsive in character, blocks out — literally as well as symbolically — the possibility of the speakers having to come to terms with the deeper antinomies inherent in their modernity and Orthodoxy. To talk about such matters of spirit would be to open a Pandora’s box of anxieties and theological conflicts with which the everyday shul Jew refuses to deal. The “small talk” of joking and gossip is infinitely safer and more manageable (p. 209).

Indeed, as Heilman points out in a more recent essay:

During the three years in which I lived and studied in a modern Orthodox community, I never once heard a serious discussion about theology or ideology. . . . Any questions about the contradictions between Orthodoxy and modernity were, if answered at all, treated jokingly.⁴

Yet this fundamental tension between Orthodoxy and modernity, while suppressed, lurks beneath the surface, making its presence felt, constituting an almost palpable reality. Modern Orthodox Jews, as Heilman points out,

stand between two sources of stigmatization: the contemporary world, which considers their Orthodoxy a stigma, and the traditional Orthodox community which looks upon their modernity with disapproval. As such, modern Orthodox Jews have only themselves (p. 266).

But, in truth, they don’t even have themselves. For this double stigmatization is not only external in nature, it is also internal. Heilman’s modern Orthodox Jew as a modern man sees his own Orthodoxy as a stigma and, as a traditional Orthodox Jew, he sees his own modernity as a stigma. For this reason, the modern Orthodox Jew is, as Heilman notes, a double Marrano, forever engaged in “passing” behavior. In the outside secular world, the modern Orthodox Jew, as modern man, downplays his Orthodoxy to such an extent that “secular-world colleagues discover, long after first impressions have been established, that [he is] also [an] Orthodox Jew”, while in the sacred world of the synagogue, the modern Orthodox Jew disguises his modernity, playing the part of the traditional Orthodox. It is all too, too pathetic.

III

Heilman’s portrait of the modern Orthodox Jew differs radically from the picture painted by other contemporary students of Orthodoxy. Thus, David Singer, a young student of the current American religious scene, in developing the position of the noted sociologist of Judaism, Charles S. Liebman, has recently argued:

It is generally assumed that the many divisions within Orthodoxy stem from the fact that one group is “more religious” than another. This is not so. . . .

4. Samuel Heilman, “Inner and Outer Identities; Social Ambivalence Among Orthodox Jews,” *Jewish Social Studies* (Summer, 1977): 234.

The actual divisions within Orthodoxy, as Charles S. Liebman has argued, reflect a church-sect dichotomy that is familiar to students of religion. The church wing of Orthodoxy consists of the "modern Orthodox" while the sectarian wing is made up of the followers of the various heads of the Yeshivot and the Hasidim. . . . Modern Orthodoxy evinces two dominant characteristics: an abiding concern with demonstrating the relevance of the *halakhah* for contemporary life, and a strong emphasis on the interconnectedness of all Jews. . . . Sectarian Orthodoxy, as distinguished from modern Orthodoxy, is marked by an emphasis on authority and separatism.⁵

For both Liebman and Singer then, unlike Heilman, there exists an entity, modern Orthodoxy, and its ideology is significantly different from that of sectarian Orthodoxy. Moreover, both deny that the traditional or sectarian Orthodox Jew and the modern Orthodox Jew are to be distinguished as being more or less religious.⁶

How are we to account for these two strikingly dissimilar pictures?

Part of the answer may be found in the fact that while Liebman, in his analysis, focuses on the various organizations and institutions of the modern Orthodox community, and Singer, in his essay, focuses on the leading modern Orthodox journal, *Tradition*, Heilman, in *Synagogue Life*, focuses on the average, typical, regular, shul-going modern Orthodox Jew. This would tend to suggest that while, indeed, there may be a modern Orthodox ideology, it is largely confined to the precincts of organizations and institutions or the pages of journals but has failed to reach and affect the average shul-going modern Orthodox Jew. As a result, his Orthodoxy, per se, is not the modern one of the official ideology but the traditional one propounded by the superficially Americanized, but essentially East-European yeshivah world. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the most popular recent Biblical commentary among modern Orthodox Jews is a series⁷ whose authors, editors and advisors are wholly products of the yeshivah world and all of whom pride themselves in totally ignoring all modern critical Biblical scholarship, be it non-Jewish or Jewish!

Yet, to explain the divergence between Liebman and Singer on the one hand and Heilman on the other by speaking of the failure of modern Orthodox ideology on the popular level would be neither entirely accurate, nor, for that matter, fair. For while it is true that modern Orthodox ideology has failed to make a significant impact on a community-wide level, it would be untrue to say that it has made no impact at all. No doubt

5. "Voices of Orthodoxy" (*Commentary*, (July, 1974).

6. Actually, the views of Liebman and Singer on this subject are not entirely identical. For, while it is true that in his major article on Orthodoxy ("Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," *American Jewish Yearbook*, 1965, pp. 21-98), Liebman uses a church-sect model to explain the differences between traditional and modern Orthodoxy, in another essay ("Left and Right in American Orthodoxy," *JUDAISM*, [Winter, 1966]), his analysis anticipates Heilman's in some respects.

7. Art-Scroll Series, edited by Meir Zlotowitz.

many, perhaps most, Orthodox Jews are like those whom Heilman describes, Jews who are committed to traditional Orthodoxy and an essentially unrelated modernity — but not all. Heilman believes that his portrait of the modern Orthodox Jews of Kehillat Kodesh is fully representative of all modern Orthodox Jews, but this is simply not so. It is not true that all modern Orthodox Jews “live lives of patterned desperation,” nor do all modern Orthodox Jews experience their modernity and Orthodoxy as two antithetical, conflicting identities. There are modern Orthodox Jews to be found in Orthodox synagogues — perhaps even in Kehillat Kodesh itself — whose Orthodoxy is, in some sense, modern; and there are modern Orthodox communities where one may hear serious discussions about theology or ideology.⁸

IV

Who, then, is this other type of modern Orthodox Jew, of whose existence Heilman — and others — are unaware and how would a modern Orthodox synagogue look if there were more of him — or her?

This modern Orthodox Jew, like Heilman's modern Orthodox Jew, is committed to both modernity and Orthodoxy, but, unlike him, strives to integrate these two commitments. He attempts to justify his commitment to modernity in terms of his Orthodoxy and, at the same time, seeks to demonstrate the significance and meaningfulness of tradition and belief for modern man. On the one hand, his modernity informs his Orthodoxy. Thus, he utilizes modern categories of thought to illuminate and deepen his understanding of the tradition and, in his study of sacred texts, makes use of the findings and methods of modern historical scholarship to the extent that they do not violate the religious integrity of these texts as he perceives it. But the movement of influence is not only one way. For his perception of the modern world and modern social and intellectual currents is shaped by his traditional perspective, so that his commitment to modernity is always critical and qualified. No doubt, this modern Orthodox Jew, despite his efforts at integration, experiences serious tensions between his modernity and his Orthodoxy, but these tensions, he is convinced, need not function, as Heilman would claim, simply as a source of anxiety and personal insecurity. Rather, they can be challenging, fruitful and creative in nature. From their differing vantage points, both those committed to a secular modernity and those committed to

8. Perhaps Heilman fails to note this other type of modern Orthodox Jew because he, himself, is a modern Orthodox Jew of the type he describes, at once a detached critical sociologist and a traditional Orthodox Jew. Thus, in “Inner and Outer Identities,” Heilman, at one and the same time, engages in highly rigorous and sophisticated sociological analysis while describing traditional Judaism before modernity in the narrow, monolithic, almost simplistic stereotypes typical of the perceptions of many traditional Orthodox Jews. In this respect, he resembles many modern Orthodox Jewish professionals who combine advanced expertise in their own fields and disciplines with surprisingly shallow and indiscriminating conceptions of traditional Judaism.

traditional Orthodoxy claim that such an integration is inherently unstable, that it is "riddled with insoluble antinomies" and is ultimately impossible to sustain, a contradiction in terms. Our modern Orthodox Jew is aware of these claims and recognizes their force. However, he stakes all and risks all on the conviction that his critics are wrong. At the very least, he feels that he will have replaced sterile isolation and uneasy co-existence with an exciting, if perilous, confrontation and interaction.

This modern Orthodox Jew would not simply criticize Sprawl City Yeshivah because it is not modern enough. Rather, because his conception of the tradition itself is informed by modernity, he would criticize its Jewish studies curriculum on Jewish grounds: for painting a monolithic picture of Judaism, for not presenting the fullness and diversity of the tradition, for presenting only one model of piety to the exclusion of all others, for scanting such subjects as Bible, Hebrew language and literature and Jewish history, for suppressing the role of critical reason in interacting with authority, for creating a false image of the religious community in history as sealed off, in hermetic isolation, from outside influences, for failing to integrate Jewish and general studies, etc. etc. On a social level, this modern Orthodox Jew would not view his involvement in the modern world as a criminal compromise but, to cite one of the most perceptive and intelligent modern Orthodox rabbinical thinkers today, as "a well-formed decision based upon a considered judgment as to what is the Torah ideal."⁹

The nature of the synagogue would also change radically if there were in it more modern Orthodox Jews of the type that we are describing. The issue of the role of women in Judaism, in general, and in the synagogue, in particular, and the problem of giving women more opportunities for religious self-expression within an Orthodox framework would be confronted in a serious and ongoing way. This is not to say that the members of this synagogue, both men and women together, would necessarily arrive at an entirely satisfactory resolution of this issue, but, at least, the problem would be a live and meaningful one. The English professor, in this synagogue, would not simply shed his secular training while studying Torah and turn into a *Yenglish*-speaking traditional Orthodox Jew but, drawing upon his professional expertise, would attempt to illuminate, for example, the study of the Bible by bringing to bear upon it modern techniques of literary analysis. Similarly, the modern Orthodox lawyer, when studying Talmud, would not simply cite irrelevant supreme court decisions, but, following the lead of a number of modern Orthodox scholars, would seek to combine traditional talmudic scholarship with modern categories of jurisprudence. Finally, the whole issue of modern Biblical scholarship and its relationship to the tradition would be faced head-on and a systematic effort would be made to see how much of that

9. Schubert Spero, "Bi-Centennial Symposium: The Jew in America," *Tradition* (Fall, 1976).

scholarship could be incorporated within a traditional framework. The synagogue, in such circumstances, might, in some respects, be a more uncomfortable place in which to pray, study and assemble, but it would be more alive intellectually and, even more important, more significant religiously.

Does such a modern Orthodox synagogue exist? Not yet. But, even now, there are some modern Orthodox synagogues which are beginning to approximate this model. Certainly not all modern Orthodox synagogues are as intellectually and spiritually empty as the one that Heilman describes. One thing, though, is certain: the direction that the modern Orthodox synagogue will take will serve as some indication as to how serious and honest the modern Orthodox community is in its confrontation with modernity.

Heilman chooses to conclude his most recent article with a flourish. "A genuine *homo duplex*, burnished with a cosmopolitan parochialism, [the modern Orthodox Jew] waits for the Messiah to solve his problem."¹⁰ No doubt Heilman's modern Orthodox Jew, inasmuch as he experiences his Orthodoxy and modernity as antithetical identities, can only perceive his dual commitment as a problem to be endured, resolvable, if at all, only in some distant eschatological future. However, contrary to Heilman, there already are modern Orthodox Jews, and there may yet be more such, who perceive this commitment not so much as a problem, awaiting a messianic resolution, but as a challenge and an opportunity, to be met and seized in the here and now.

10. "Inner and Outer Identities," p. 238.

Ethnic Activism: The Hasidic Example

JEROME R. MINTZ

WHEN THE HASIDIM ARRIVED IN THE UNITED States after the Second World War, they began a new struggle for cultural survival. The social situation in which they found themselves was far more fluid than any they had experienced in pre-war Europe. Most of the men had to develop additional skills in order to find work; others required capital to open businesses. Young and old had to familiarize themselves with a new language and the strange ambience of New York — the subway travel, the close contact between men and women, the long hours at work, the demand for consumer goods, and the intrusive values hawked on television and in the streets. After centuries of discrimination and persecution in Europe, they were confronted with the possibility of a new, more open relationship with government and with the larger community.

America, too, was in turmoil, about to begin a journey from Berlin to Vietnam and to shift from the “melting pot” to “affirmative action.” The hasidim were to be challenged by the social conflicts and opportunities of the fifties and sixties; they were to become embroiled in the seventies in a lawsuit concerning voting rights which they would appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court; in 1978 they would be involved in “one of the worst clashes of civilians and police officers in New York since the riots of the 1960’s. . . .” Despite their fierce attachment to the Orthodox Jewish laws and the traditions of the past, they were marked for social change. New social attitudes and new forms of organization and leadership were required for them to survive as an ethnic group in the city.

The hasidim settled in groups ranging from fifty to one thousand families in three neighborhoods in Brooklyn — Williamsburg, Crown Heights, and Borough Park. Each group was united by its Rebbe and by common customs derived from its place of origin — Satmar from Hungary, Lubavitch and Stolin from Russia, Bobov from Galicia. Each neighborhood also acquired a particular stamp of its own, but while the hasidim in Borough Park could develop at a distance from the urban turmoil, those in Williamsburg and Crown Heights unwittingly had settled in the eye of the urban crisis.

The hasidic Jews of Williamsburg are hemmed into a narrow band of blocks jutting from the Williamsburg bridge. Their neighborhood of aging brownstones and new housing projects is locked on one side by the East River and on the other by Bedford-Stuyvesant, a black ghetto. A wide belt of housing, now sorely missed, was torn out in the 1950s by the construction of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, which runs in a sub-

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merged roadway through the heart of the neighborhood. The majority of the thirty-five thousand hasidim in Williamsburg are followers of the Satmar Rebbe (after the town of Satmar in Hungary where, before the Second World War, the Rebbe and many of his followers lived). They are regarded as the most fanatic of Orthodox Jewry because of their uncompromising attitudes toward law and custom. They have established new requirements for punctiliousness so that *glatt kosher* (ultra kosher) butchers have won a virtual monopoly at the retail and wholesale level among Orthodox Jews anxious to fulfill every shading of the law. For the past three decades the vision of the Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum, who died on August 19, 1979, at the age of 92, has been to preserve every vestige of the past — not one jot or tittle to be changed. Adamantly opposed to the state of Israel, the Rebbe has made it clear that, Zionists and the United Nations notwithstanding, he and his followers prefer to wait for the Messiah to restore the Jews to the land of Israel.

The Lubavitcher hasidim settled in Crown Heights, a middle-class neighborhood on the edge of Eastern Parkway some three miles from Williamsburg. There are now perhaps a thousand Lubavitch families in New York, but their numbers are expanded by the students attracted to the Lubavitch yeshivah and by the stream of visitors from other parts of the United States as well as from South America and Lubavitch settlements in Israel. Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, now seventy-eight years of age, has concentrated his energies on training young leaders to revitalize Judaism throughout the world and to return less religious Jews to the Orthodox fold. New Yorkers have become accustomed to seeing rented Hertz trucks — “Torah tanks against assimilation” — parked at intersections throughout the city and young, bearded Lubavitch hasidim urging less religious Jews to take up Orthodox practices: to put on *tefillin* (phylacteries) daily, to attach a *mezuzah* (amulet) to their doorpost, to keep a charity coin box, and to bring prayer books into their homes. These practices are common to Orthodox Jews but proselytizing is not. The Lubavitcher hasidim appear more modern than do the Satmar hasidim, but both are governed by a similar mental set. When Rabbi Schneerson was elected Rebbe in 1950, following the death of his father-in-law, his followers were still in shock that his predecessor had died without bringing the Messiah.

The Stoliner hasidim, one of several small hasidic groups of less than a hundred families, settled in Borough Park. A pleasant neighborhood of ample two-story houses and occasional apartment buildings, Borough Park had maintained a stable middle-class population of Italians and Jews. Beginning in the 1950s it attracted hasidim and other Orthodox Jews who could not squeeze into the limited housing in Williamsburg or who felt uneasy about the changing conditions in Crown Heights. The Stoliner hasidim who moved to Borough Park were, for the most part, American-born young men, the sons of immigrants who had been followers of the

Karlin-Stolin Rebbes in Europe earlier in the century. They brought the Stoliner Rebbe, one of the few from Stolin who survived the concentration camps, to America after the Second World War. Their major goal was not to proselytize to Orthodoxy but to develop a strong hasidic group and to build a religious school. Initially they had been divided between Williamsburg and Borough Park, but since they lacked the resources to develop two centers they focused their attention on the newer neighborhood. They began with a house of study and a yeshivah in two storefronts on Sixteenth avenue and made plans to reconstruct a garage and automobile agency on 54th Street for use as a yeshivah. The Stoliner continued to develop their plans after their Rebbe's death in 1955.

During the period of hasidic resettlement, a great change which would have a profound effect on their community was taking place in the United States. There was a major population shift of nonwhites from the south to the urban centers of the north. Unemployed blacks from the south, as well as Hispanics from Puerto Rico and other Caribbean locations, moved to northern cities seeking greater opportunity. Unfortunately, one result of this movement was to pit these groups of immigrants against each other in the scramble for jobs, for housing, and for power at the lower end of the social scale.

At the start of the 1950s, the population of Brooklyn, where the hasidim were settling, was over 90 percent white (Jew and Christian). Soon, however, it was confronted by the social problems common to urban neighborhoods beset by rapid change and a shrinking economic base. Recent census studies show that during the next two decades the white population declined by 30 percent so that it now comprises a still declining 60 percent of the borough. In 1957 there were just under a million Jews in Brooklyn (903,000); by 1970, 43 percent of those Jews (389,000) had moved elsewhere, principally to Long Island and the more suburban boroughs of Queens and Staten Island, as well as completely out of the state, to Miami. In Crown Heights during the decade of the sixties, three-quarters of the white residents moved out and the neighborhood shifted from 70 percent white to 70 percent black.

Since the hasidim do not function as independently as do citizens in the secular community, the decision whether or not to imitate other whites and flee the decaying inner city was largely a communal one. While other whites simply gave up their apartments and took up new ones in suburbia, the hasidim had to consider the enormous social and economic investments which they had made in their neighborhoods. After surviving a decade of destruction and dislocation in Europe, their need to remain rooted in close proximity weighed upon them. The private school systems and religious institutions that they had recently constructed had to be maintained. Because they had no stereotypic reaction to the shifting racial balance, the two major groups — Satmar in Williamsburg and Lubavitch in Crown Heights — decided to remain where they were.

In Europe the organization of each hasidic group consisted of the Rebbe, the *gabbai* (his assistant), and an elite of rabbis and laymen named by the Rebbe to be responsible for the community's institutions — the yeshivah, the ritual baths, the house of study, and the rabbinic courts. The remainder of the community was composed of workers, middlemen, tradesmen, teachers and housewives. While this general structure continued in America, there were distinct problems and opportunities concerning jobs, education, politics, housing and safety, so that a new organizational structure was required.

The Rebbes of the various hasidic groups provided the philosophical direction for their followers, but their spiritual and ritual concerns tended to remove them from secular problems, and much of their time was taken up by petitions for personal advice or for a blessing. The Rebbes were required to pray and to study in order to intercede with the heavenly powers; they were not expected to interpret civil law, to raise funds, to negotiate with government officials and neighborhood leaders, or to cope with urban violence and crime.

Although the Rebbes have customarily played quiet roles in regard to secular problems, their followers have taken their cues from the Rebbe's general advice in his *toyreh* or, perhaps, from an offhand remark. The action and organization that followed was, of course, subject to the Rebbe's approval or disapproval if he chose to comment. In Crown Heights in 1964, for example, there were contrasting responses to the rising concern over the safety of the neighborhood after a number of students were beaten and a rabbi's wife was attacked. The Bobover hasidim went to their Rebbe and suggested that they ask for police protection when they left their nightly prayer meetings to return home. The Rebbe told them how, in his father's day, an anti-Semite had thrown a rock through the window; afterward, the anti-Semite contracted blood poisoning and had to have his hand amputated. "This is better than police protection," advised the Rebbe. But a few blocks away, in response to a remark by the Lubavitcher Rebbe on the need to defend one's life, a young follower, Rabbi Samuel Schrage, organized a group called the Maccabees to patrol the streets from midnight until five a.m., keeping in radio contact with a central office. These hasidim were determined to reshape the image of the Orthodox Jew who remains passive while his possessions and, finally, his life are taken from him. The Bobover hasidim soon moved out of Crown Heights to the safety of Borough Park, but the Lubavitcher hasidim decided to stay, and as testimony to their determination they made an expensive renovation and expansion of their house of study.

While the hasidim were confronted by new problems in their rapidly changing environment, the general population of the United States was undergoing a period of great social change. Issues concerning civil rights and social welfare, race relations, the distribution of wealth, and the prerogatives and morality of power were discussed in Congress and the

courts and were ultimately carried to the streets. In the 1950s and 1960s, to secure civil rights and social equality the black population carried out nonviolent protests in the form of bus boycotts, marches and student sit-ins wherever they were denied equal rights and equal service. The protest began in the south, although its reverberations were soon sharply felt in the north. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, following the 1963 March on Washington and President Kennedy's death, capped the struggle for equality in public accommodations. A year later, after the incidents in Selma, Alabama, minority voting rights were protected by the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1965.

In the sixties, social pressures arising from the civil rights struggle and the population shift were exacerbated by our growing involvement in Vietnam. American participation in the disastrous war there intensified the moral conflicts at home and drained the nation of its strength and its wealth to remedy domestic problems. Beginning in 1965 the political and social unrest which had begun in the south exploded in the urban north, culminating in the riots of 1967 in Newark and Detroit and other communities. The turmoil in the streets continued until 1970 and was regarded as a mandate to the nation. It argued that minority groups were underrepresented in the government and in the dominant political parties, in the percentage of trained and employed workers, and in influential policy making posts on the local and national levels. In 1968 the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders urged greater interaction between the residents of the ghetto and local government officials. It called for neighborhood task forces, for grievance mechanisms, for legal services, for assistance to city mayors, for hearings on issues affecting the ghetto, and for legislation to relieve local problems.

In Europe, the hasidim had had little contact with the surrounding population and with the government. Jewish life was insular: Orthodox Jewry had a rabbinic legal system to handle torts within the community; there was a system of charity, education, loans, burial and sick care. For centuries, within the pale of settlement, Jews had been limited by law to a few occupations, prevented from owning land, and forbidden to live in the cities. They were victimized as well by the harsh conscription laws of the times, but whenever possible these discriminatory laws were circumvented and bribery was commonplace. However, centuries of superstitious accusations and organized anti-Semitism had made the Orthodox community fearful of any open expression of conflict. Now, for the first time since the inception of hasidism in the eighteenth century, the hasidim in the New World were able to engage in dialogue with a government sympathetic to minority needs.

Although they are considered the most traditional and rigid of Orthodox Jewry, the Satmar hasidim have been the least reluctant to experiment with the structure of their leadership and with the scope of their responsibilities. The Satmar Rebbe had realized the dimensions of the

problems facing his followers soon after they had settled in Brooklyn. He also recognized his own limitations in secular matters, and to compensate for his own inexperience he named an overall community manager, Rabbi Leopold Friedman, who, from his arrival in 1948 until his death in 1972, ran the affairs of the Satmar court. Rabbi Friedman had been a bank director in Czechoslovakia before the war and he put that executive experience to use in building the extensive yeshivah system of Satmar which was supported, in part, by the profits of the community-owned butcher shops. He developed an interest-free loan service and planned for a medical and dental clinic. After Friedman's death, the Satmar Rebbe chose Rabbi Leibush Lefkowitz to be the next community manager of Satmar. Rabbi Lefkowitz, a manufacturer, developed plans for increased employment and housing.

Those who began to function as community managers — in Lubavitch or Satmar or any of the other groups — have had one characteristic in common: contact and experience with the outside society. While their religiosity is beyond question, they are curious about the outside world and are aware of its diversity. These men are not usually to be found among the learned rabbis whose knowledge of the subtleties of sacred law is often matched by their innocence of secular matters. Rather, the managers are among the most sophisticated and active men of the community. They often run their own businesses, although the affairs of the community take up most of their time. They are designated by the Rebbe to act as his spokesmen, but they serve as “culture brokers” for the entire community, mediating between the hasidim and the surrounding society.

The Satmar hasidim are organized more efficiently than are most towns in America. They have a medical and dental clinic, a pharmacy, and an ambulance service which is available to any Orthodox Jew. Their yeshivah system educates over 5,000 children, and they run a summer camp program. The community has a new house of study with room for more than 7,000 people and a new bathhouse for women. In addition, the Satmar hasidim publish a weekly newspaper, provide interest-free loans and own a number of *glatt kosher* butcher shops whose profits are returned to the community. To keep their far-flung membership together they have organized a private bus company connecting Borough Park and Williamsburg, and they have their own employment agency to provide job listings.

To establish and coordinate the various Satmar programs, the community manager requires assistants armed with practical experience. These assistant managers are quick-witted and agile debaters, at home with the Talmudic set and able to hold their own with government technocrats, educators, and local politicians. Under the aegis of a non-profit community organization they have obtained government funds to retrain unemployed hasidim as mechanics, machine repairmen, com-

puter programmers, bookkeepers and secretaries. They have helped to create and operate a federally-funded program of loan assistance for small, minority businesses, and they established an English language training program for children whose first language is Yiddish. When sections of older dwellings were torn down and replaced by housing projects, they sought to gain the maximum number of apartments available for Orthodox Jews, and later they participated in landlord-tenant committees in the new housing, attempting to resolve tensions among the various ethnic minorities. They have become indispensable trouble shooters for the community — a new type of distinctly American hasid, devout but knowledgeable of the bureaucracy of the American government.

The Satmar hasidim also organized occasionally for struggles that took place in the street. In general, the hasidim lived side by side with Hispanics and blacks with little or no communication between them. There were few open clashes but, on occasion, when the hasidim felt that they were being consistently molested they would confront the offender, often in overpowering numbers. In 1973 the parish priest in Williamsburg accused the police of ignoring numerous hasidic “mob beatings” of Hispanics in the neighborhood. The police denied that many such incidents had taken place, but did acknowledge five in recent months which were investigated and “action . . . taken when warranted.” The Police Chief explained to the *Times*:

The hasidim are a tightly knit community with a long distrust of the police in Europe and America. Their tradition is not to report to authorities when they are victimized by a thief or assaulted, but to take matters into their own hands, administering a beating to the suspect and then releasing him.

Rabbi Leibush Lefkowitz, the community manager, commented:

We are a peaceful people. We do not attack anybody. But we will not be driven from our community by those who wield knives and come from elsewhere.

By the late 1960s the hasidim had caught the attention of local politicians who recognized them as a small, but potent, voting bloc. Although the hasidim eagerly sought citizenship, they were initially uncertain about participating in secular elections. A voting drive was undertaken by Satmar and, in 1972, hasidic votes helped to return a Catholic, John Rooney, to Congress because Allard Lowenstein, a Jew, held views antithetical to theirs on government funding for parochial schools. Encouraged by their success at the polls, the Satmar hasidim launched a full-scale registration drive for the 1974 elections.

In May of that year, however, hasidic hopes for political influence suffered when the New York State Legislature reapportioned State Senate and Assembly districts in Kings, New York, and Bronx counties. Redrawing the legislative map was the result of a court decision that held New York's 1972 apportionment in violation of the Civil Rights Act. In

Kings County the districts affected included Bedford Stuyvesant, the largest black ghetto in Brooklyn, and the adjoining neighborhood of Williamsburg, with some thirty-five thousand hasidic Jews. Complaints had been made that the perimeter of Bedford Stuyvesant had been broken up into small sections to fit into majority white districts, thereby blunting non-white voting strength. As a remedy, the Department of Justice stipulated that new districts be created with 65 percent non-white majorities in order to ensure the election of non-white State Senators and Assemblymen. To meet the demands of the Justice Department, the Joint Legislative Committee split the hasidic population between two districts, 20,000 in one and 15,000 in the other. They were divided between Assembly Districts 56 and 57 (with non-white populations of 88.1 percent and 65.0 percent) and into two Senate districts (the 23rd and 25th) with non-white percentages of 71.1 percent and 34.7 percent. (They did remain in a single Congressional district.) The hasidim protested the division of their community, contending that the arbitrary change diluted their voting strength and deprived them of their rights under the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments.

In his argument in Federal Court, Nathan Lewin, counsel for the United Jewish Organizations of Williamsburg, raised two constitutional issues: first, whether under the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments state officials could be directed by the federal government to establish non-white majorities of 65 percent where there was no past discrimination; and, second, whether racial distinctions and racial advantages in the electoral process were permissible under the fifteenth amendment when they were "not designed to 'correct a wrong'." Since racial considerations to correct a prior wrong had already been established in earlier litigation (it had been upheld that pupils could be assigned on the basis of race; and the use of race was sanctioned to end discrimination in housing and in preferential hiring), Lewin's major thrust was to separate the hasidic redistricting from those cases with *overt* past discrimination and to underline the reverse bias of using racial quotas in voting.

The judgment of July 25, 1974, by Senior United States District Judge Walter Bruchhausen, however, affirmed the legitimacy of racial considerations to right a wrong in apportioning voting districts. He decided that the hasidim had standing in court as white voters but not as a separate ethnic group, and he observed that white voters were adequately represented since the total white population of King's County was 64.9 percent. The Court of Appeals affirmed the lower court's ruling in a two-to-one decision, and in the fall of 1976 the case reached the Supreme Court. The American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League and the Jewish Labor Committee, alarmed at the use of racial quotas in voting, filed *amici* briefs.

While the Satmar hasidim waited for the determination of their case in the Supreme Court, they became embroiled on another legal front. In

order to provide jobs and housing for their growing population, they planned to expand to the suburbs and develop a new community with light industry. Over an extended period of time they had purchased land in Monroe, New York, some forty miles northwest of the city, and they began the construction of 25 single family houses and 80 garden apartments that were especially planned for hasidic living, with twin kitchen sinks and stoves to ensure separation of meat and dairy foods. Building was still underway in 1974 when families began to move in. When some local residents expressed reservations about their new neighbors, Rabbi Leibush Lefkowitz, the community manager, observed to the *Times*:

People don't like living with strange people, but after two years they will find out what a good element we are. Monroe will find that a lot of benefits will come from us.

Unfortunately, two years later the Town Board accused the hasidim of violating the local housing code by converting eighteen single family houses to multiple family units. The dismayed authorities uncovered other activities typical of the East European *shtetl*: the basements of eight garden apartments were being used as schools and *shuls*; a commercial food store was also located in one basement and the operator was arrested. The Town Board ordered further construction halted until the violations could be corrected.

Rabbi Lefkowitz chastized the township for its lack of hospitality, and countered the Town Board's request for an injunction with an offer to incorporate the Satmar housing as a separate village of some 450 acres. The compromise settlement that was reached in Federal Court in October, 1976 clearly gave the hasidim the better of the argument, allowing them to incorporate in an area of potentially 340 acres where they could establish their own regulations regarding families, stores, schools, *shuls*, and apartments.

Speaking with the patience of one long accustomed to reconciling tradition and modernity, Rabbi Lefkowitz said: "We believe we are complying with the law. Our family units are large and closely knit, leaving understandable doubt by those who do not know us and our customs."

On March 1, 1977, in a 7 to 1 decision, the Supreme Court ruled against the hasidim. But despite the near unanimity of the vote, the arguments of the Justices reflected the great diversity of views regarding the central issues. Justice White, joined by Stevens and in part by Brennan, Blackmun, and Rehnquist, delivered the opinion of the uneasy majority. He asserted that voters belonging to a race in the minority are "similar to that of the Democratic or Republic minority that is submerged year after year by the adherents to the majority party who tend to vote a straight party line."

Chief Justice Burger, the lone dissenter in the case (Justice Marshall took no part in the decision), attacked the decision on a wide front,

arguing for reapportionment along neutral lines and against the use of racial quotas, the absence of neutral standards, and the loss of the ideal of the “melting pot.”

While Justice Brennan sided with the majority of the Court, he felt called upon to explain his vote

because this case carries us further down the road of race-centered remedial devices than we have heretofore traveled — with the serious questions of fairness that attend such matters . . . This impression of injustice may be heightened by the natural consequence of our governing processes that the most “discrete and insular” of whites often will be called upon to bear the immediate, direct costs of benign discrimination . . . [T]he impression of unfairness is magnified when a coherent group like the Hasidim disproportionately bears the adverse consequences of a race assignment policy.

The hasidim were disappointed with the decision but they were not defeated in their activist pursuits. “We will fight for our rights any place, any time,” commented Rabbi Lefkowitz to the *Times*, adding that, “We will not hesitate at any time in the future to resort to the courts if the need should arise.” Nor were the hasidim to be completely ignored in the political arena. Despite their numerical weakness, they have an estimated 80 percent voter turnout and offer lively support for any candidate. “We lost but we gave them a good scare,” commented one hasidic activist after the elections in the 23rd Senate District.

As in Williamsburg, the hasidim in Crown Heights have had to struggle in the streets and in the courts. They are, however, a smaller minority in Crown Heights, and are less capable of controlling their environment. They are more exposed to criticism and hostile reactions.

In Williamsburg, new highways and housing projects swept away blocks of older housing, but in Crown Heights the housing remained relatively unchanged. Middle-class blacks, many of them West Indians, had moved into the stately mansions on President Street, and into the surrounding brownstones and small apartment houses. The racial balance stabilized at 70 percent black and 30 percent white, and both groups expressed similar concerns about property values and crime statistics.

There were still tensions in the streets of Crown Heights, in part because of crime, in part because of the presence of the Maccabees, the hasidic patrol, which blacks felt was directed against them. Some blacks complained of harrassment by hasidic vigilantes. For their part, the hasidim maintain that they sought to have interracial patrols and that they do not attack anyone but, rather, use their patrols late at night to inform the police of suspicious persons. They point to the high crime rate, to the many attacks against hasidic individuals, and to the murder of a hasidic youth in a street telephone booth in 1977.

There were numerous points of friction for those contending for neighborhood power and influence during the early 70s. Black spokesmen voiced resentment of alleged favored treatment toward hasidim in

terms of employment, government loans to small businesses, and political clout. The policeman stationed in front of Lubavitcher headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway, which to the hasidim is a mark of honor befitting the world-wide leadership of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, was a constant reminder to the blacks of their own lack of influence in the corridors of city hall and the state house. Like the blacks, the hasidim have high visibility: they won election to the board of the local antipoverty agency, a hasid sat as a member of the local school board, and there was a publicly funded day care center run by the hasidim. The black-controlled community board had rejected a hasidic plan to open a drug abuse center, but hasidim were now opting to participate more fully on the community board itself. In 1976, when the Board of Estimate of the City came to redivide the city's community districts, the disagreement sharpened between the community leaders of the black community and the hasidim.

As district H was then constituted the hasidim were in a 5 to 1 minority. They petitioned to have the southern portion of District H, where they lived, declared a separate community district so that they could have a greater voice in matters affecting their neighborhood. The proposed area had the required 100,000 in population, and blacks would still hold a three to two margin. On December 23, 1976, the Board of Estimate voted to cut the district in half. Black leaders immediately asked for an injunction in federal court to halt the Board of Estimate's action, but the injunction was denied. The division stood, but it left the black leadership in a bitter, frustrated mood. (Since then, however, conflicts on the community board have been closely tied to city-wide politics in which Jew and blacks have become allies as well as antagonists. A rabbi was subsequently elected as chairman of the community board of the new district; however, in February, 1979, the rabbi was ousted in favor of a black as a result of a power struggle between Theodore Silverman, a City Councilman, who is Jewish, and Stanley Steingut, the former Assembly Speaker, who is also Jewish. Moreover, on the same slate were a priest and another rabbi, who was elected as vice-chairman.)

Social tension on the streets of Crown Heights rose sharply in June, 1978, when a local black businessman was strangled during a dispute with police officers over the arrest of his brother. Two days later, a sixteen-year-old black youth, after reportedly striking an elderly man with a stick, according to another, was beaten senseless by a large group of young hasidim. These events united the black community against both the police and the hasidim. Accusations concerning favored treatment for hasidim were repeated with renewed passion. A new Black Citizens Patrol was formed, in part as a reaction to the Maccabees. Black frustration focused on "the people in long coats," and in July the Black United Front held a rally opposite Lubavitcher headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway to protest police brutality and hasidic influence, and to express their wider resentment at the absence of black voices in city affairs. (At the same time

the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association held a ceremony nearby to honor policemen slain in the line of duty and to underline contract demands, and they marched to the black rally where there was a brief verbal exchange between the patrolmen and those blacks waiting for their own rally to begin.) The two thousand blacks at the rally heard the hasidim characterized as "terrorists" and "our oppressors."

While the anathagonism between the hasidim and the blacks remained in the news during the summer, the violent rhetoric heard at the rally was never translated into hostile action. There are a number of reasons suggested for the tempered reaction. The black community itself is divided by varying classes and ethnic groups, and middle-class blacks in Crown Heights are wary of being used by agitators from Bedford Stuyvesant. These blacks, like the hasidim, are concerned with protecting the quality of the neighborhood, with maintaining the housing, and with crime committed by outsiders. Moreover, as George Vecsey, a *New York Times* reporter, discovered, "the long-range problem in Crown Heights may be lack of deep contact rather than a readiness in two camps to fight." Walking in the neighborhood streets a week after the rally, he found that blacks did not consider there to be trouble between the hasidim and the blacks. As one young black man noted, "I've never seen these hasidim look for a fight. I'll tell you the truth — if they beat up on somebody, I'll bet they were provoked." Blacks were, however, offended by hasidic indifference — "Why can't they say hello when they walk past?" — a reaction commonly felt by secular Jews as well as non-Jews, all of whom stand beyond the pale of religious law and are consequently outside the circumference of the hasidic world.

While the hasidim in Williamsburg and Crown Heights were coping with myriad social problems, relationships within the hasidic world, between Satmar and Lubavitch, began to fracture much in the same manner of hasidic and rabbinic feuds of the past. The followers of the two groups are in visible contradiction, with the Satmar hasidim dressed in the exact replica of Orthodox garb in Hungary a half century ago, while the Lubavitcher hasidim present a conservative but contemporary religious bearing. The different modes of dress are not symbols but are, rather, precise statements of Satmar concern to avoid contamination by law-breakers and Lubavitcher willingness to interact with secular Jewry. Lubavitcher forays onto college campuses and city streets and into the drug scene to win converts to Orthodoxy are looked at askance by Satmar hasidim who vigorously guard their own borders. The major point of contention, however, between the two groups has been the state of Israel — attacked by the Satmar for its secularism and for usurping the role of the messiah, and supported by Lubavitch in the new nation's struggle to reestablish its historical presence in the Middle East. The Lubavitcher Rebbe may object to secular directions in the Israeli school system or to

inducting women into the army, but he backs the government and is a hard-liner on territorial rights.

Although the Rebbes have guided the viewpoints of their respective groups, the official leadership takes no responsibility for the following events. In Williamsburg in 1975 during Purim, Satmar hanged an effigy of the Lubavitcher Rebbe from a telephone pole. (Satmar officials condemned the latter action but said nothing about the attack on the Israeli flag.) The Yiddish weekly newspaper, *The Algemeiner Journal*, sympathetic to Lubavitcher causes, became forbidden reading in Williamsburg, banned by its leadership, and, a result, newsdealers carried it at their own risk. Harrassing phone calls to subscribers, distributors and advertisers took a more dangerous turn when the newspaper's offices in Borough Park were ransacked and later burned to the ground, while a candy store in Williamsburg that carried the newspaper was also razed by fire.

Differences between the two groups were sharpened by their responses to the Israeli raid on Entebbe to rescue Jewish passengers in July, 1976. The Lubavitcher applauded it as a miracle while the Satmar scorned it as a misguided risk. Tempers rose again the following year when the Lubavitcher hasidim sent their "Torah tanks" into Williamsburg, the heart of Orthodoxy, an intrusion that the Satmar hasidim found to be intolerable. As the trucks turned down Rodney Street where the Satmar *bes medresh* is located, they were greeted by flying stones, the police escort notwithstanding. Subsequently, there were warnings of possible violence if the Lubavitcher hasidim continued their custom, begun under the previous Rebbe, of visiting the *shuls* of Williamsburg on the last day of Passover to deliver short talks on Lubavitcher *hasidus*. The present Lubavitcher Rebbe, however, indicated that he could not stop something which his predecessor (his father-in-law) had initiated. On the seventh day of Passover in April, 1977, the Lubavitcher hasidim, en masse, took a three mile stroll to Williamsburg and there was a startling confrontation, with a few zealots pummeling one another. Less religious Jews, sometimes offended by hasidic disdain, noted the irony of a secular state using its police force to protect religious pietists from each other. A few days following the clash, threats were made against the life of the Lubavitcher Rebbe and the police arranged 24-hour police car protection outside his home.

The range of difficulties in Williamsburg and Crown Heights has lent a special aura to the more peaceful environment of Borough Park, which is composed of two large, stable ethnic groups: Jews of varying degrees of religiosity (with a majority attached to hasidism) comprise seventy percent of the population, while Italian-Americans make up twenty percent, with Hispanics, blacks, and other ethnic minorities constituting the remaining ten percent. Although the area is referred to as "low-crime, high income," in fact, most of the residents of Borough Park are working people of relatively modest means. According to a recent study by the Community

Council of New York, 44 percent of the Jews in Borough Park earn less than \$10,000 a year, while 20 percent, many of them elderly retirees, earn less than \$4,000 yearly.

The relative calm of Borough Park had been broken by a few incidents — in 1973 when there was a brief protest at the 66th Precinct after two hasidim had been beaten by two young men wielding two-by-fours, and in 1975 when Rabbi Meir Kahane of the Jewish Defense League, with some 150 supporters, made a “march for a safe neighborhood” through the nearby Hispanic area, an event followed a few days later by the firebombing of two synagogues and the homes of two rabbis. (Twenty-six other firebombs were found during a search of nearby roofs.) The hasidim have never been free from petty harrassment and are continually cursed and taunted, particularly by hecklers in passing cars. In recent years residents have noted a perceptible increase in local crime. Nonetheless, Borough Park has been designated by the City as a “model self-help community” and, in fact, hasidic groups have proliferated in number and have grown in population with little inhibiting social conflict.

The Bobover hasidim, who had fled Crown Heights, were among the chief beneficiaries of the encouraging environment. Their Rebbe, now seventy-four, has been less awe-inspiring than the Satmar and Lubavitcher Rebbes, but he is more accessible. Energetic and social, he has participated actively in community affairs, vigorously presiding over the Sabbath meals, cutting and serving food and drink, telling stories of the past Rebbes at the Sabbath *melaveh malkeh*. When he had first arrived in America, his Galician followers almost completely wiped out in the death camps, he aided a remnant of newly arrived displaced persons, arranging job training and encouraging them to take up trades and businesses. Subsequently, the group profitted from their successes as well as from sympathetic donors.

The Bobover Rebbe has carefully avoided the controversy over Israel and has concentrated his group's energies on educational and community affairs. In addition, the conflicts within the New York City school system have prompted many secular Jews to send their children to religious day schools. As a result, his hasidim have grown twenty-fold over their early modest numbers. In recent years they have built a new yeshivah and dormitory, they have organized senior citizen groups, they own a catering hall for weddings, and they have purchased apartment buildings and real estate in a neighborhood development plan. Like the Satmar hasidim, they have learned to utilize government aid to advance their programs.

In Borough Park, too, the Stoliner hasidim have demonstrated that while the role of the Rebbe is integral to hasidism, on occasion a group can survive for an extended period without one and with a managerial committee solely responsible. For almost twenty years — from the death of their Rebbe in 1955 until the Rebbe's grandson reached maturity — Stoliner was directed by an elected committee. During that period the symbolic

figure of the Rebbe remained as a memory and a promise. When the crisis period ended, these hasidim were able to transfer to the young Rebbe a new yeshivah supported by a thriving membership.

On December 2, 1978, Borough Park became the storm center of the hasidic community. At 1 a.m., an elderly man was robbed and stabbed to death by assailants who were then unknown, after attending Friday night prayers. He had worshipped at the Bobov *bes medresh* although he was not a member of the Bobov community and he was not a hasid. News of the murder spread by word of mouth and by 11 o'clock on Saturday morning groups of men and women, most of them hasidim, gathered in front of the 66th police precinct on 16th Avenue to protest the death and to demand increased police protection. The four policemen on duty were surprised by the sudden appearance of two hundred protesters who entered the station house while another two thousand gathered outside. The hasidim are aware that included among those inside were some "out to make trouble" who could be more closely identified with the Jewish Defense League than with the hasidim. The sergeant at the desk reported later that "It got filled wall to wall with people . . . We were literally fighting for our existence." The sergeant called for assistance and 170 policemen from a number of precincts responded to "patrolmen in trouble."

The hasidim maintain that the protest was orderly until the police reinforcements arrived. As one hasid described: "They came swinging their clubs, and one guy had a smile on his face while he was hitting people." As the blows rained down, they tried to shield their heads and then responded angrily. In the ensuing thirty minutes, 72 persons were reported injured, including 62 policemen, a count regarded with skepticism by the hasidim present. Assemblyman Samuel Hirsch, his aide, and a mayoral aide, there to urge calm, were bloodied by policemen. One hasid had a heart attack at the scene and later died at the hospital. The devastation inside the station house was impressive: windows were wrecked, the outer doors of the station house were torn off, and filing cabinets were broken and their contents scattered on the floor. The following day the *New York Sunday Times* headline read: "Hasidim Storm a Police Station."

It will be difficult for the courts to assign blame to the police or to the hasidim in adjudicating subsequent charges and countercharges. (Assemblyman Hirsch pressed a complaint against the officer who had clubbed him but was later himself placed under arrest with four others and charged with assaulting two policemen.) Apparently the police behaved in the way police can be expected to behave, while the hasidim behaved in the way hasidim are *not* expected to behave. Exchanging blows with policemen *inside a police station* would be unthinkable not only to their Russian, Polish, and Galician forebears, but to virtually any group in the nation. It is a measure of how far the hasidim have travelled since they arrived in the New World as dispersed and cowed survivors.

In the weeks following the riot, hasidim strolling in the streets of Borough Park observed that the police were suddenly more visible and that they responded promptly to calls for assistance. Even more noticeable were the reduced number of curses and taunts they received from passing cars. Are the drivers thinking, the hasidim wonder, that maybe they can fight back?

There has been another, more surprising development in Borough Park: the women of the neighborhood have formed a civilian patrol to monitor the streets during the mid-day hours to prevent crime. The patrols consist of a driver and a radio operator equipped with a walkie talkie which is connected to a home receiver monitored by a third woman. If an emergency arises the woman at home telephones the police. The women's patrols have an ethnic diversity that was never achieved with the Maccabees in Crown Heights; nor do the women imply any physical threat. As a result, they serve to lessen, rather than to intensify, ethnic animosity. This communality of Hispanic, Italian, and Orthodox Jewish women recalls Faulkner's vision, in *Intruder in the Dust*, of the Southern white woman as mediator in the crisis of black and white.

. . . and he looked at her too, straight, thin, almost shapeless in the straight cotton dress beneath the round exactitude of the hat and he thought *She's too old for this* and then corrected it: *No a woman a lady shouldn't have to do this . . .* and he remembered again what old Ephraim had told him after they found the ring under the hog trough: *If you got something outside the common run that's got to be done and can't wait, don't waste your time on the menfolks; they works on what your uncle calls the rules and the cases. Get the womens and the children at it; they works on the circumstances.*

At this writing, despite the disputes and social controversy that they suffer, the fate of the hasidic community is not in doubt. Certain features of hasidic life — their sense of common religious purpose, their division into small groups under the leadership of inspired Rebbes, their discipline and their submission of self-interest — have enabled the hasidim to maintain their Orthodoxy and at the same time to cope with social change. In adopting the new American activism of the sixties they have developed a new structural organization. Of course, nothing is new in religion — it is merely revitalized. While hasidic-government relations are unique, the areas of concern mirror the responsibilities of the ancient *kehillah* (community), and the heightened air of activity matches the hasidic spirit that first gave birth to the movement.

The Blood Libel Case at Massena – a Reminiscence and a Review

SAMUEL J. JACOBS

THE ONLY AUTHENTICATED CASE OF A RITUAL murder charge against a Jewish community in North America occurred a little over fifty years ago in a small town in Northern New York just before Yom Kippur. It aroused a flurry of excitement in large city newspapers, in Jewish publications, and amongst Jewish defense organizations, but, unfortunately, no one made any real attempt to write up and thoroughly document the incident until recently. Alas, nearly all of the main characters, both Jew and Gentile, are now dead, and newspaper stories published at that time are surprisingly sketchy and inaccurate. Though some written material remains untouched, we must rely, for the most part, on the memories of those people in the Jewish community who are old enough to have retained clear recollections. Since there were only about twenty such families in those days and since only a few of them were directly involved, it is obviously not easy to arrive at a definitive account a half-century later.

Until recently there was little reference to the incident in print. There is some allusion to it in Joshua Trachtenberg's *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism*, and in Edward Flannery's *The Anguish of the Jews*. In 1931, the usually dependable Jewish Publication Society issued a work by Lee Friedman, *Pilgrims in a New Land*, which purports to describe the Massena incident in some detail. This account, however, is so inaccurate as to be termed fanciful. Sometime in the past decade, Saul Friedman, now associate professor of Jewish and Near Eastern History at Youngstown State University, became intrigued by the endnote in Trachtenberg's book and decided to follow it up. Presumably, what began as a graduate degree thesis grew into a hardcover book published recently by Stein & Day, *The Incident at Massena*.

Subtitled "The Blood Libel in America," it has as its theme: It Did Happen Here. These words are underlined on the dust jacket. The author claims to have given us, finally, a complete, detailed and accurate account of what happened in Massena, New York, on Sept. 22 and 23, 1928. The jacket blurb sums it up thus:

How Ku Klux Klansmen, nativists and a handful of ignorant, superstitious bureaucrats, including the Mayor and the State Police, combined to suggest that the Jews had kidnapped a small girl for use in Yom Kippur rituals. A

SAMUEL J. JACOBS, a life-long resident of Massena, was in business there and acts as lay rabbi when necessary.

mentally impaired Jewish youth was brought in and questioned and the Rabbi summoned to an interrogation by the authorities while a mob milled outside.

Allowing for the usual publisher's hyperbole, we may well ask whether this incident was as serious or as sensational as is suggested. In order to try to understand what really happened, we must know something about Massena and its background.

Massena is today a first class village of some 15,000 people and is situated in the township of the same name and the county of St. Lawrence. It is on the extreme northern border of New York, just three miles from the St. Lawrence River, which here forms the international boundary between the U.S.A. and Canada. It is a lively, industrial enclave within a lovely, rural, parkland setting. In the nineteenth century it was a farming center, undistinguished except for the fact that its famous sulphur waters attracted visitors from far and wide. The people were nearly all white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, with New England antecedents. Over the years, there had been a steady trickle of French-Canadians from across the border and there had also been a sizeable number of Irish families who had found comfortable refuge there after the disastrous Irish potato harvests of the mid 1800s. Then, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Massena's population suddenly increased and radically changed.

What had happened was the development of water power. A canal, some four miles in length, had been dug from the St. Lawrence River to the Grasse River, which runs through the village. The aluminum smelting industry, then just beginning, needed large amounts of cheap electric power and it was available at Massena. The Pittsburgh Reduction Company, later the huge Aluminum Company of America, built a large factory at the northeast edge of the village, but labor was in short supply, and the local people did not relish the hard work and long hours in the Alcoa potrooms. The needed help was supplied by immigrants from all parts of Europe, especially the East and South. Alcoa's recruiters brought many of them directly from the New York City docks to Massena, so that, by 1920, the village had a polyglot population with immigrants from more than fifty countries.

The natives looked with distrust and dismay upon these alien faces and the strange tongues grated on their ears. For the most part, the new-comers were Roman Catholic and the natives feared that these immigrants, together with the French-Canadians and the Irish, would swamp them in a Catholic sea. (Catholic-Protestant rivalry was open and sharp until after World War II.) Superficially, at least, the Jews who came to Massena as early as 1898 fitted smoothly into this population mix. They opened retail stores or they peddled; they mixed more openly with the natives and the other newcomers; their Americanization proceeded at a faster rate. Before long the police were asking them to interpret for Poles and Russians when the latter ran afoul of the law. Most Jews felt at home

in Massena, though the local "Archie Bunkers" were sometimes heard spouting their crude anti-Semitic remarks and there was still much genteel anti-Semitism behind the Main St. camaraderie. Still, the Jews thanked the Almighty every day for having escaped both the terrors of Czar Nicolai and the sweatshops and slums of New York City.

By 1919, the Jewish community had grown to perhaps eighteen or twenty families; they had incorporated as Adath Israel Congregation and purchased the former Congregational Church in the heart of town. While many, perhaps most, were still struggling to make a living in the 1920s, a few had become financially comfortable. Some of the boys had been on the Massena High School football team (and football was extremely important in the village). While, outwardly, everything pointed to a community living congenially with its neighbors, the decade was rife with racial and religious prejudices, for the Ku Klux Klan had spread out of the South into every corner of the nation. Prestigious campuses and isolated small towns had witnessed cross burnings and Massena, too, had had some in 1928. The presidential campaign between Smith and Hoover had exposed the raw nerves of religious bigotry.

This was true of the entire country. Yet it was only here in Massena that the notorious blood libel was raised. Can we answer the question: why? What, exactly, did happen in Massena?

The main outline of events is clear and there is little dispute over most of the facts. Yom Kippur, 1928 (the Jewish Year 5689) came on a Monday, with Kol Nidrei on Sunday night, Sept. 23rd. The day before that, late on Saturday afternoon, a four-year old girl, Barbara Griffiths, got lost in the woods and thick brush which, at that time, covered the edge of the village just a couple of blocks from her home. Quickly, search crews, family, friends, neighbors, went looking for her, but, when darkness fell, she had not been found. Naturally, there was great concern; autumn nights in Massena can be cold and damp. In those days, searches of this kind were largely conducted by the Volunteer Fire Department, which included several Ku Kluxers in its ranks.

It soon became apparent that the girl was lost beyond the incorporated boundaries of the village and police jurisdiction passed from the local to the New York State police. In those days, one or two State Troopers were stationed in places like Massena to uphold law and order beyond village and city boundaries. Sometime on Saturday evening the State police took over. Then, somehow, as the hours stretched toward midnight and there was no sign or clue to the girl's fate, an ugly rumor was born, grew and spread. Its exact nature, its precise wording, changed from mouth to mouth, from minute to minute. There was an important Jewish holiday about to take place, wasn't there? And wasn't there some thing about blood, Christian blood, being needed in their rituals? Could there be some connection with the girl's disappearance?

We do not know who in the Jewish community first head these

frightening insinuations. Probably it was the president of the congregation, Jacob Shulkin, whose twenty-one year old son, William, had been escorted home by the police. William, called Willie by everyone, was known to be mentally impaired. Yet, he had been questioned by the State police and what he told his father, though confused, was enough to alert the latter to a potentially dangerous situation for the entire Jewish community. Jacob Shulkin immediately consulted by telephone with other leading members of the congregation and a meeting of the *baalei batim* took place in his home late that night. The situation was considered serious enough to place a long distance call to the home of Louis Marshall in New York City. Marshall, a champion of Jewish causes and a native of upstate New York, assured the worried men that he would send someone up to Massena by the very first train.

What else was taking place on that frightening Saturday night is very unclear. One Jewish businessman claims that his cellar was searched. There is no evidence that other premises were thus entered, though some people say that men had gone along streets and back alleys and had shone flashlights randomly into the shop and cellar windows of Jewish stores.

The drama continued the following morning. The two troopers in charge of the investigation were advised by an unknown informant to question a man by the name of Morris Goldberg. One must assume that this suggestion was prompted by blatant anti-Semitism because Mr. Goldberg was on the periphery of the Jewish community. He knew that he was a Jew; that was all. For many years employed by Alcoa, he was, so to speak, their "token Jew." In fact, he was interrogated while on the job at Alcoa. Knowing nothing of Judaism, he pleaded ignorance, but the clumsy way in which he phrased his answer somehow left a hint that there might be something to the ritual murder charge after all.

The troopers reported back to the Mayor, Gilbert Hawes, who had irregularly assumed a leading role in the investigation even though legal responsibility was in the hands of the State police. Nearly everyone who remembers Hawes describes him as the very model of an ignorant, bigoted, small town politician. The rumors that he had heard, combined with the enigmatic statements of Willie Shulkin and Morris Goldberg, convinced him that the whisperings of Jewish involvement had some basis. The time had come to go to the source, to call in the rabbi for questioning.

The spiritual leader of Adath Israel Congregation in Massena was Rabbi Berel Brennglass. The Jews thought of him as *shohet* – *baal t'filah* – *heder* teacher, rather than as *rav*, and he was usually referred to as "The Rev. B. Brennglass." Actually, he had the educational background and qualities of leadership of a rabbi and in later years he was usually referred to by the more prestigious title.

Whether or not the rabbi had heard anything of the ugly developments is not known, but, presumably, someone had alerted him. When

Trooper McCann appeared at around noon, outside of his front door, some five blocks from the Town Hall-Police Station, the rabbi quickly denounced the trooper's impudence in disturbing him so shortly before Kol Nidrei. With righteous wrath, he sharply scolded the man for the incredible gall of raising the ancient and terrible charge of ritual murder. He refused to accompany him to the Town Hall but said that he would appear later to make a voluntary statement. Not long afterward he walked briskly down to the police station (located then, as now, in the basement of the Town Hall). When the Mayor and the trooper attempted to put questions to him, the rabbi quickly and vehemently turned the tables on them, demanding to know who was responsible for the contemptible libel. In no uncertain terms he denounced all who dared to accuse Jews of such heinous crimes in the 20th century, particularly in these enlightened United States. Certainly, all of them should hang their heads in shame.

After delivering his angry speech, the rabbi left abruptly. There is one report that he also called out to a mob of men who were hanging around the alley that led from Main Street to the police station. They should search for the little girl, he is supposed to have said, rather than pursue medieval calumnies against the Jews. It is said that both the Mayor, Trooper McCann and others loitering around the police station were abashed, at least momentarily, by the rabbi's skillful tongue lashing. It is entirely possible, however, that this little episode is apocryphal.

About an hour or two later, around four o'clock on that Sunday afternoon, little Barbara Griffiths, who had inadvertently brought about all of this, wandered out of the woods and was noticed by someone along the highway, less than a half mile from her home. None the worse for her twenty-four hours in the woods, she was quickly reunited with her family. By the time that the Jews arrived in the synagogue for the Kol Nidrei service at 6:00 P.M., everyone knew that the drama was over. With God's help, all was well.

Surprisingly enough, despite the frantic search for the little girl, the wild rumors and the nervous phone calls amongst the Jewish community, some Jews knew nothing of what had happened until their arrival in *shul* on Sunday night. If Massena had been the scene of the mass hysteria and the anti-Semitic outbursts which Friedman describes in his book, one would find it hard to believe that even a single Jewish family had remained ignorant of the whole matter.

By mid-afternoon, perhaps at the very moment when the girl was emerging from the woods, Boris Smolar, of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, reached Massena, having been dispatched by Louis Marshall to ascertain what was going on there. During the following week, he filed several stories for New York City newspapers and in the Nov. 26, 1978 issue of *The Jewish Week - American Examiner*, he again wrote a short account of the incident. This version is seriously marred by a repetition of the tale of the old Polish farmer who began the rumor. There was, in fact,

no Polish farmer ever involved. (Some Massena people still say that Smolar did not reach Massena until several days later. He insists that he did get there on Sunday afternoon, though train schedules for those days make it seem unlikely. The itinerary which S. Friedman gives for Smolar's train trip includes several imaginary rail junctions.)

Though the incident was over, demands by the Jewish community leaders for full apologies from both the State police and Mayor Hawes were not immediately met. It would appear that the Mayor added insult to injury by seeing no need for abject apology. After a few weeks, however, he and Trooper McCann did apologize fully and formally to Rabbi Brennglass and a delegation from the Massena Jewish community in Albany at the office of Major John Warner, head of the State police. With this episode the Massena Jewish community was anxious to let the matter rest, but the desire was partly frustrated by an unseemly squabble between Louis Marshall and Rabbi Stephen Wise as to which of them should bring the unsavory incident to a conclusion. Their controversy really has little to do with Massena and nothing more will be said about it here.

In Massena itself, the years passed and no one — Jew or Gentile — felt much like talking about the libel. Though, occasionally, some of the older Jewish residents mentioned it quietly among themselves, it was, for all intents and purposes, dead and forgotten. When the Bicentennial History of the Town of Massena was written in 1977, this writer contributed a chapter on the history of the Jews there. A paragraph was inserted, summarizing the 1928 incident. It came as a shock to many contemporary residents of the town, Christians and Jews alike, though there were few comments or questions.

At the same time, Prof. Saul Friedman was winding up his research, which he had begun several years earlier. The result, *The Incident at Massena*, is a strangely uneven piece of work. The author has a feeling for the dramatic and tells the story in a gripping, breathless fashion, and his insight into the ordinary, daily life of some of Massena's Jewish families rings very true. Also, he brings to life the *baalei batim* of those days almost as if he had known them. In our opinion, he correctly pinpoints the source of the rumor as one Albert Comnas, a Greek immigrant who ran a small ice cream parlor and sandwich shop almost across the street from White's Hotel, where the two troopers stayed. These two men had eaten in Comnas' place regularly since arriving in Massena and the Greek was known as an out-and-out anti-Semite. His old world background undoubtedly included the blood ritual myth and he had ample opportunity to arouse the suspicions of the State troopers.

Unfortunately, the accuracy of much of the rest of the material in the book is questionable. The work has been poorly edited, if at all. That it was never proof-read is evident to anyone who is in any way acquainted with Massena and there is evidence of a rush to get it into print in time for the fiftieth anniversary of the event. The book abounds in misspelled names

("Scheetz" for Sheets; "Kniff" for Kriff, "Mimi" for Mamie, "Bob Cummins" for Bert Cummings," etc.). People are incorrectly identified; thus, Eleanor Dumas, a journalist, has become Eleanor Eldon-Browne, "a town historian." Businesses are listed which did not exist until years later. Many locations are wrong; e.g., the sulphur waters of Massena Springs are not behind the former Shulkin home, but two miles away. Distances are distorted; Syracuse is 165 miles, not 200, from Massena; Tupper Lake is 75, not 50, miles away. The digging of the first power canal at the turn of the century involved no locks; the locks did not come until the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway in the 1950s. This writer is listed as a "teen-ager," when he was only nine years old; his father, "old man Jacobs," was a vigorous man of thirty three! One could go on and on in this vein. Before making the accusation of "nit-picking," one must ask seriously whether an author who is so careless of detail and of fact could, nonetheless, be correct in all of the main important points.

One of the oddest things about this book is the author's expressed dislike for the Massena area and the St. Lawrence Valley. He speaks (pp. 12-13) of "endless stretches of unattractive beeches . . .," "the stark, scrub-infested southern side of the St. Lawrence River," "the purity and dark-green of the Canadian side contrasted with the tawdry vacation cottages, lemonade stands, and filling stations which pocked the road from Alexandria Bay to Massena." To strengthen his case, he quotes from a book by Carl Carmer, noted chronicler of upstate New York, who mentions that he dislikes that part of the state around Malone, some forty miles from Massena, but which is not part of the St. Lawrence Valley. Besides, one is at a loss to understand how all of this is in any way relevant. Presumably, the author of *The Incident at Massena* wanted to create a scene of bleak, dreary northern forests and of the hard-bitten, dour people who live there. About tastes in geography, as in food, there can be no disputing.

There are, however, some basic questions which must be raised about the way Friedman has written up the whole affair. For one thing, he paints a picture of a village seething with mass hysteria, of angry mobs roaming the streets around the synagogue and the business section, and of Jewish premises searched and scrutinized. Even after the girl was found, when the Jews walked to the synagogue some two hours later, they supposedly had to pass through a gauntlet of jeering Gentiles. Did those angry mobs actually exist? Did they taunt and jeer? Were cellars searched? Friedman accepts these events as fact, but there is little corroboration from people who were here at the time. If groups of angry men milled around the synagogue, how is it that some Jews knew nothing about the incident until hearing it discussed inside the *shul* before services began?

So far as we can determine at this late date, there was no hysteria as we understand the term. There was, rather, a grim quiet and high tension. That is not to deny that the situation was fraught with potential danger.

Yes, there was real fear on the part of those Jews who had heard about the rumor. Most of the community had come from Eastern Europe and knew only too well what whisperings about ritual murder could lead to. A Jewish girl who had immigrated with her family from Galicia to Massena shortly after World War I recalls asking her mother, “Mommie, are we going to have a pogrom?” No doubt, the full impact of the weekend’s event was not felt until later. The nightmarish question which tortured the people then and continues to haunt the survivors is: what might have happened had the girl been found dead? Would a depressing footnote in American Jewish history have become, instead, a chapter dark with tragedy?

Among those who know Massena and have some knowledge of the incident, there is a strong feeling that author Friedman, in searching for a human interest thread in order to tie the events together into a more readable account, seriously erred in making Willie Shulkin the central character, the “anti-hero,” if you will. Willie had a life-long history of mental illness, as was well-known in town. Everyone also knew that he was neither dangerous nor violent. Inexplicably, he was the first Jew questioned on that Saturday night about the girl’s disappearance. No one will ever know what his reply was; presumably it was jumbled and incoherent but there must have been some hint that the Jews might have had something to do with the girl’s disappearance. In any case, what he told his father later that night was sufficient to sound the alarm in the Jewish community. Friedman spends a disproportionate amount of time telling us about Willie Shulkin, conjecturing about the exact nature of his illness. To say that he was “the true victim of the affair” (p. 180) strikes me as reaching a bit far.

The true hero was Rabbi Brennglass, of sainted memory. Had Massena’s rabbi been of a different character, one shudders to think what might have happened. This man, whose English had an unusual accent (influenced, in part, by the family’s stay in Wales for a few years en route to America), was a powerful speaker with a charismatic personality. His magnetic, piercing eyes, neat Van Dyke beard, steel gray hair (partly hidden by an old-fashioned high *yarmulka*) made him an impressive figure. He knew what had to be said and was not afraid to say it. He had dressed down the State trooper who had come to his house to summon him to the police station and, later on at the police station, he spoke to the Mayor and the troopers in no uncertain terms. He was a man of surpassing moral and physical courage, and his message came through in that volatile situation. I recall that after his beautiful rendition of *Kol Nidrei* (he was a talented *baal t’filah*, too) he addressed the congregation. Though I was only a child, I remember his charge to the community to stand up — as proud Jews and staunch Americans — against all anti-Semitism. He inspired all of us, old and young, and we emerged from the synagogue that night with our heads high and physically unafraid.

In the negotiations seeking apologies and in the general aftermath, Rabbi Brennglass played a leading part. His son, Samuel Lawrence Brennglass, now a prominent member of the New York City Bar, informs me that his father left considerable written material relating to the incident. These documents, of inestimable value in writing a definitive history of the affair, were, regrettably, not used by Friedman in his research, although he did seek some information from Attorney Brennglass by telephone. And, in a rather peremptory way, Friedman also dismisses some written recollections left by the late Jacob Shulkin, saying that they were in serious conflict with some points in his book.

Such procedures underline some of the major deficiencies in the author's method of research. Much of the interrogation was done by telephone. Only once or twice did Friedman actually make a trip to Massena and, even while here, he spent most of his time on the phone. It is well to remember that not everyone was cooperative. Some people felt that he was striving after sensationalism and could not be relied upon to give an objective reporting. Others felt that, at this date, the incident should not be raked over in public again. At least one Jewish man in Massena, a son of one of the original *baalei batim*, insists that he has important information on the source of the rumor but that he preferred not to reveal it to Friedman. Unaccountably, some people were not interviewed at all. Thus, the Jewish woman who lived next door to the rabbi and who witnessed the State Trooper coming to get him was not questioned. Another person who is quoted several times was actually out of town at the time. Some people were too young to have useful recollections of what happened. Most important, some of the people whose interviews bulk large in the book have special biases of their own. There was, then, no real attempt to sift through and evaluate the information; much of it may have been hearsay or worse.

To summarize the blood libel incident in Massena in 1928, we must admit that it happened, that it was extremely serious, and that it was directed against a whole Jewish community. If the girl had not been found alive the consequences might have been far more serious. Saying so much, we must caution that much of the local color supplied by Friedman cannot be corroborated. Nevertheless, certain conclusions are obvious:

— The libel itself was a recent importation from southeastern Europe. The volunteer fire department, which was in charge of the actual search for the girl, contained a number of men who were active in the Ku Klux Klan. Thus, the rumor fell quickly onto fertile ground.

— The American scene encouraged the Jews to act more promptly, decisively and effectively than might have been the case in Europe. Massena's small Jewish community was extremely fortunate in having a man like Rabbi Brennglass at its spiritual helm.

— While only part of Massena's Gentile population was actually caught up in the anti-Semitic agitation, other village leaders, the ministers

and the one newspaper, remained shamefully silent.

— However, in the opinion of this writer, who has lived in Massena during most of the time since the incident happened, it is hard to detect any influence, one way or the other, on everyday relationships between Gentiles and Jews in later years.

Yes, as Friedman says, it can happen here. Anti-Semitism, even in its crudest, most discredited forms, can strike anywhere, anytime. The author warns all Jews to be ever vigilant. He implies that ignorance goes hand in hand with bigotry. Still, it is arguable whether increased awareness would have averted the kind of situation that arose in Massena in 1928. In any case, most people would agree that the Massena incident should be thoroughly and accurately recorded in the annals of American Jewish history.

Soviet Anti-Semitism

BORIS M. SEGAL

THE ANTI-SEMITISM OF THE RUSSIAN LEADERSHIP corresponds to the attitudes of the populace. In this case it is true that "the people and the Party are one," as is stated in the official Soviet incantations, because the spiritual and cultural levels of the leaders and the citizenry are quite close. Blatant popular anti-Semitism conforms to the blatant and tactical official anti-Semitism of the authorities. It has penetrated into all social levels and those who do not see it are either blind or do not wish to see it. This, of course, does not prevent the existence of friendly relationships between individual Jews and individual Russians, who sometimes say, as a form of a compliment, that their friends "aren't like other Jews."

In its scope, popular Soviet anti-Semitism far exceeds the anti-Semitism of pre-revolutionary Russia. In any gathering, in any social or professional group, one constantly hears conversations about Jews who "try to push their way into everything," who deceive, speculate, steal or commit treason. That is one of the most popular topics. Of course, it is not every Jewish adult who will be cursed out with the word "Kike," but children in school are thus constantly assaulted and nobody punishes the offenders. Whom does a drunk start to curse out first? The Jews, of course. According to the Russian saying, "What is in the head of a sober man is on the tongue of a drunk." If, as has been shown, the simple Russian man before the revolution harbored a basically religious antagonism toward Judaism, then this hatred is now of a typically racist character. Anti-Semitism has grown up in the national republics. In certain of them (in the Ukraine), it is even stronger than in the Russian Federation. In others (the Baltic and Central Asian republics), it is expressed somewhat less openly because of growing enmity toward Russians. This is the price of the lauded "friendship of nations" of the USSR, about which Soviet propagandists have so tiresomely blown their horns, as if about one of the great achievements of Soviet power!

As Vladimir Vysotsky ironically sings in one of his songs,

Why should I be considered just riff-raff, a bandit? Wouldn't it be better for me to go over to the anti-Semites? At least on their side there is the support and enthusiasm of millions.

Sad as it may be, it is not only the Party and not only the people, but also the intelligentsia which is imbued with the spirit of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semites now are not censured. One ought not be surprised at this

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development. Nothing remains of the old, highly cultured and liberal Russian intelligentsia. The so-called new Soviet intelligentsia stems mainly from the common people. (It is an "amorphous, urbanized mass" as the philosopher, G. Pomerantz, called it.) Psychologically, this intelligentsia differs very little from the people. A majority of it are the children of yesterday's peasants and workers, imbued with the spirit of consumerism; they are narrow-minded, authoritarian, conservative, and filled with national prejudices. The exceptions, however, comprise its upper stratum — the spiritual elite, among whom are many truly cultured people and dissidents (including many Jews).

Of course, anti-Semitism exists throughout the world. I will not go into all of the deep pre-requisites for it, but only into the causes of its growth in the USSR. Besides the underlying reasons for, and the influence of, official "anti-Zionist propaganda" in Soviet society, there are several additional causes. The first is the general "swing to the right." As the Russian writer, Merezhkovsky, said seventy years ago: the farther the revolution thrusts Russia back, the farther the reaction will set it straight. Paradoxical as it may sound, Soviet society today is much more "right-wing" and conservative than pre-Revolutionary Russia or modern capitalist society.

Revolutionary and social enthusiasm have been replaced, in the past fifty years, by disillusionment with official Marxist ideology and, due to the reaction, with a propensity for conservatism and, specifically, for anti-Semitism. But hasn't the cultural level of the people been raised? And wasn't this supposed to have furthered the lessening of national prejudices? Indeed, thanks to the introduction of education, the general cultural level of the major portion of Russian society is now somewhere in the middle, between the high level of the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia and the illiteracy and ignorance of the lower classes. It is, however, not really a middle level, but closer to the formal literacy of half-educated people. In other words, the basis of public opinion in the USSR is formulated by people who are formally educated, but who, on their spiritual level, are primitive, narrow-minded, authoritarian, possessing one-sided information, and, therefore, inclined to chauvinism.

Finally, one must take into consideration that the Soviet man is much more frustrated than is his counterpart in the free world. The system suppresses such fundamental human needs as freedom, success, achievement, security or self-respect. Any type of activity in the USSR is dangerous. Almost anything is punishable. But any sort of frustration arouses reactions of protest, aggression, envy, scapegoatism. Hostility toward Jews is the most traditional method of channeling with impunity all of those unsatisfied wishes and needs. In the USSR people are not as isolated from each other as they are in the West. Everyone is "in the public eye," people all know each other. There it is very difficult and dangerous to secure any advantages, whether apartments, cars, good clothing or

even tickets to the showing of a new movie. Such a situation creates special pre-conditions for feelings of envy, which are usually sublimated as feelings of justice.¹ One should also add that Jews themselves, owing to the peculiarities of their national psychology, give a certain basis for this.

The Psychology of the Soviet Jew

What does it mean to be a Jew in the USSR? Soviet Jews face all of the difficulties which exist for all Soviet people, but they have additional problems.

I can not here go into the details of the psychology of the Soviet man. I will only say that it was molded under the influence of those catastrophic historical and sociological changes which took place in Russia during the past half-century. Some of these changes are universal and can also be observed in the West. I mean the collapse of Judeo-Christian morality, the growth of consumer psychology (the forming of *homo consummens*), the rising expectations of the poorer classes who demand better economic and social conditions for themselves, the weakening of patriarchal principles, the breakdown of the family. Contemporary man's sense of obligation is becoming weaker and weaker; to a lessening degree he is dependent on tradition. To a certain extent these changes are the result of urbanization, industrialization, population migration, and the psychological phenomena connected with them — such as social stress, anxiety about the future, weakening of ties within one's own group, and striving to achieve material success as quickly and completely as possible in order to obtain the maximum of creature comforts here on earth.

These factors enforce in people traits such as egotism, alienation, isolation from society, a propensity for aggression and neurotic and psychosomatic disorders, and the growth of alcoholism and crime, particularly among the youth. All of these socio-psychological changes are observed throughout the world. In the Soviet man, however, they are more strongly expressed, inasmuch as the process of urbanization and the simultaneous destruction of traditional values took place at a much faster rate in Russia and has been of a violent, forced nature, (although Soviet authorities are trying to cultivate a "new, Soviet morality").

On the other hand, the Soviet people have suffered an experience unknown in the West, that of total terror before the merciless and bloody dictatorship which destroyed all of the best and most socially valuable forces in the country. Another experience is the constant lying and

1. There is a typical Soviet anecdote in which God asks a Jew what he would want if he could have anything in the world. The Jew answers that he would want to have the same good apartment, the same high salary and the same sort of beautiful wife that his rich neighbor has. To an identical question, a Russian answers that his neighbor, a Jew, has a wonderful apartment, a high salary, and a lovely, beautiful wife, and that he, the Russian, has it much worse. Therefore, he asks God to arrange it so that things are as bad for his neighbor, the Jew, as they are for him.

double-think when, in order to survive, one must daily swear love and devotion to the regime, renounce one's own convictions, and betray one's friends and family. Finally, there is the experience of constant deprivations, of hunger or malnutrition, of minimal conditions for normal life, of shortages of housing and clothing and creature comforts. People have grown up in a setting in which it has been impossible to satisfy their most elementary needs.

Today, Soviet people live in a society where the state is omnipotently directed against them, where the system works for itself and for the ruling bureaucracy. It is a society in which, in order to achieve anything, one must constantly "make a fuss," enter into conflict with the law, deceive, give and take bribes, or seek protection and "ways of getting around" obstacles. These conditions give rise to the ambivalent attitude of the Soviet people toward the authorities. On the one hand, a person is constantly dissatisfied with them; constantly feels himself to be deceived and passed-over. On the other hand, he has a passively demanding attitude toward the state and its paternalistic tendencies. He expects that he will be taken care of, he grows accustomed to the fact that if he makes efforts to secure something, if he is cunning and makes demands, then it will be possible to get something more from society (the state) — much more so than if he lives by honest labor.

But, besides these general characteristics of the Soviet people, Jews in the USSR possess additional traits peculiar only to them. One must consider the traditionally and generally known aspects of the Jewish national character which have set them apart from the peoples with whom they have lived in the Diaspora: energy, dynamism, an enterprising nature, the desire to oppose generally accepted beliefs and prejudices. (I am speaking, of course, of the best, and not of universal Jewish qualities.) These qualities can manifest themselves in socially useful ways as well as in negative ones, depending on circumstances.

In the USSR, these national traits aided and abetted the Jews in the first period of the society's development, when they served it faithfully. However, later on, in keeping with the bureaucratization of the state and the creation of a new, chauvinistically inclined class, these qualities were conducive to the Jews' being compelled to be cunning and get around the laws. In turn, this development reinforced anti-Semitic tendencies in the USSR. Thus, the Jews find themselves under a double yoke. On the one hand, like all Soviet people, they are choking under the pressure of a rigid hierarchical regime. On the other hand, they are subjected to additional persecution on a national basis. They suffer because of the specific conditions in a regulated and highly centralized society where any kind of activity is punished.

The Jew grows up in a setting where he constantly senses that he is a "second-class citizen." From childhood on he experiences humiliations and hears the mocking of other children. When he becomes an adult, he

begins to understand more clearly that almost all roads to success in a career are closed to him. People with creative abilities look with irritation on less gifted comrades who do not have the "fifth point" in their internal passports² and who enter universities, who are granted opportunities for political, scientific or creative activity, who travel abroad on business, or who occupy responsible posts. At the same time, for a Jew, even if he possesses the genius of an Einstein, much of this is unrealizable; he must be cunning and have special connections in order to achieve what his comrades can have without any trouble. But even if, for example, he has, with great troubles, achieved certain social or academic success, then he must remain in the background. At best, he must carry out the instructions of his Russian higher-ups.

I have spoken about people with creative qualities. But what has been said applies to Jews striving for material success. They are a rather large contingent in the USSR — workers in trade, in restaurants and other "smart dealers." These people, thanks to their own energy and the inertness of other people, often contrive to live rather well. However, they are forced to swindle, to give and take bribes from management, and find themselves in constant fear of exposure. Many of them actually are brought to court and get long prison sentences.

How do Soviet Jews react to the system of discrimination and social stress? In different ways, by adaptive or defensive reactions or through more stable changes of character. As mentioned above, many of them are forced to be devious and to violate the law. This necessity leads to certain stereotypes of behavior, which anti-Semites usually call the Jewish style of life.

At the same time there are, among Jewish people, widespread anxiety, a sense of insecurity, uncertainty about the future, dissatisfaction and various neurotic symptoms and complexes: inferiority or hostility.³ The more typical reactions among Russians under stress and frustration are aggression and alcoholism, but Jews under the same conditions develop neurotic and psycho-somatic disorders (hypertension, etc.). The incidence of these disorders among Soviet Jews is much higher than among other Russian people.

In previous years, the most common reaction to the anti-Jewish campaign was mimicry, the imitation of Russian customs, a striving to assimilate. People avoided talking about Jewish topics, condemned Zionism, emphasized their loyalty to the regime and, insofar as was possible, changed their first names and patronymics to Russian forms (it is

2. *i.e.*, who are not Jews.

3. However, despite the harassment, the great majority of Jewish people do not manifest hatred toward Russians and Russia. On the contrary, a lot of them have strong feelings toward Russian tradition, literature, art and religion (sometimes, perhaps, too much). But, of course, this is a typical Jewish trait, which has been observed in many other countries (in the past in Germany, Poland, etc.).

not possible to change one's surname). They married Russian women and gave their children the nationality and the last name of the mother. Some Jews were so afraid of being accused of any connection with other Jews that they became cowards and more anti-Semitic than the authorities. For example, a Jewish manager in a factory would tend to hire only Russians, but no Jews.

Even now there are many such Jews, especially among members of the Party, though, in recent years, more and more Jews have taken an active part in the democratic movement. A sizeable number of dissidents are Jews, (as was true before the revolution). This factor, naturally, tends to increase the anger of the authorities against Jewish people, whom they consider as sources of revolt in their country.⁴

On the other hand, after the creation of the State of Israel, national consciousness and sense of pride was awakened in some Jews, many of whom applied for exit visas to their historical homeland. There have emerged many young people who are seeking to learn the history of their nation, to study their mother tongue, and their religion, all of which are actually forbidden in Russia. And all of this is taking place despite the persecution by the KGB and the anti-Zionist propaganda campaign in the press. This is, of course, a gratifying phenomenon.

However, I would not venture to speak categorically about the national rebirth of Soviet Jewry, as some authors do. In my view, it has not yet happened. For most dissident Soviet Jews, Zionism takes on a superficial character and is only a protection against the anti-Semitic policy of the Government. A portion of them are not Zionists at all. Some of the Jews emigrating to Israel or to the U.S.A. go there not for nationalistic or political motives, but in search of rapid material success. They have no interest in the future of Jewry, but are only concerned with saving their own necks (unfortunately, that is the general attitude of many human beings). On the other hand, a life in "capitalistic," individualistic open society, where there is strong competition as well as many spiritual and economical problems, is far from ideal for many emigrants. These facts, as well as the previously mentioned peculiarities of Soviet people, add to the difficulties of life and to the subsequent disillusionment of some Soviet Jews, who expected more attention and more opportunities in the Free World. It takes a long time before Soviet emigrants change their attitudes about paternalism in society.

Conclusions

The experience of Russian Jewry shows that Jews cannot peacefully exist and develop as a nation under the conditions of the alien mono-

4. Soviet leaders would prefer to see all Jews leave Russia, but they can not afford to allow this because it would set a dangerous precedent for other citizens who would also like to emigrate. On the other hand, Soviet propagandists insist that their society is "the most perfect society in the world." How can they explain the desire to leave this paradise?

national state. The history of Soviet Jews, who actively took part in the struggle for the building of "international," socialist society in Russia and who ended up as the victims of that system, once again affirms this truth, that was long ago propounded by Zionist theoreticians.

The Jews have no future in Russia. They will either assimilate, or emigrate, or, at worst, they will perish, if the development of Soviet society again turns in the direction of bloody repression. In other words, they are faced with a choice: exit from the country — or ruin (spiritual or even physical). There is no third alternative — *Tertium non datur*.

Israel

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Poems from the Hebrew

translated by BERNHARD FRANK

Even On The Loveliest Of Nights

DOV KHOMSKY

Even on the loveliest of nights stars
die suddenly — and no one knows
it's swallowed them. And no one weeps
and none laments. The survivors
shed their gold — capricious and flickering.

Even on the loveliest of nights the bats
slip by, black in their cunning and flight.

The striped horizon
crouches low as a curling snake.

Breezes retreat through the silence,
retreat mercilessly.

Even on the loveliest of nights —

This Way, This Way

ABBA KOVNER

You are the mother of my little ones lost some in the fire
some in the wood and some waiting for the gate
that does not open you the mother of
my pretty little ones left unborn
for their sake I followed you
to the end of the fable
an unsown land
without an
end

BERNHARD FRANK *teaches comparative literature at the S.U.N.Y. College, Buffalo, and
edits the poetry journal, Buckle.*

This Fugitive Beauty

ELI NETSER

If I could fetch you all the poets,
all the sculptors, all the architects of the dazzling
forms and bridges arching from here to there.
If I could fetch you all the painters with
their magic palettes, and all the other artists,
all of them. Wailing wailing soundlessly. Depleted like the h
glass
is this fugitive beauty.
At least then put
your hand in-
to mine.

The Bird of My Being

ISRAEL EFRAT

Now the bird of my being sings
only when I shut window and door,
and lower the shades.

Now between me and the world
the thread is so thin,
a mere wink will expel it.

They say the bird sings
more sweetly
when blinded.

Witness and Rebellion: The Unresolved Tension in the Works of Elie Wiesel

MAURICE FRIEDMAN

THE UNRESOLVED TENSION BETWEEN WITNESS and rebellion that lies at the heart of Elie Wiesel is not a simple pull of opposites. The true greatness of Wiesel lies, indeed, in the creative interaction of these two — sometimes opposed, sometimes identical, sometimes moving from one life-stance to another and back. So far from wishing to anticipate a resolution of this tension, we must, instead, wish that it be maintained in all the integrity of which the author has shown himself capable.

This tension is nothing new within Judaism. It infuses the history of Israel, from the rebellion of Adam and Eve, through Abraham's contending with the "Lord of Justice" for the sake of the people of Sodom, Jacob's wrestling with the "angel," Job's trust and contending, the Talmudic assertion that "every dispute that takes place for the sake of Heaven shall endure," to Levi Yizhak of Berdichev's calling of God to trial for His treatment of the Jews. "You are my witnesses, says the Lord," according to Isaiah 43:12, and the Midrash adds, "And if you are not my witnesses, I, as it were, am not the Lord." Israel's side of the Covenant has again and again been as witness to God precisely through contending — through wrestling with the nameless messenger until dawn and receiving the blessing of an ever new name, Israel — he who has fought with God and with man and has prevailed.

But what is the blessing that comes to the witness of "Night" who finds himself caught again and again in the double pull of speaking and remaining silent. To begin to answer this question we must turn to Job, whom Wiesel, in *Messengers of God*, rightly calls "our contemporary." Whether the poet who wrote the Book of Job was expressing the plaint of a single, innocent man smitten by a suffering that made meaningless all conceptions of divine justice, or of the folk who were in confusion and despair following upon the defeat of Josiah, it is clear that the Job of the poem sees his contending, itself, as the true witness for God, in opposition to his friends who show partiality, who deduce Job's guilt from his suffering, who turn away from what they know about him to comforting platitudes, and who are, in the end, reproached because they "have not spoken what is right of me as has my servant Job." Only Job can say, "He will slay me. I await it," yet add, "But I will argue my ways before Him" and, in clear

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condemnation of the false witness of his friends, "It is my comfort that a hypocrite cannot come before Him."

Job receives no explanation or justification of his suffering, but he does receive an answer from the voice in the whirlwind. God, who was far from him, becomes near to him again. Is such a happening possible for the "Job of Auschwitz" who lives in a time of the "eclipse of God"? The "Job of Auschwitz" is the survivor of the Holocaust who has had to live the rest of his or her life with the memory of what happened and with the "survivor guilt" of the one who knows, as Frankl witnesses, that "the best of us did not survive." What of Elie Wiesel himself who, after ten years of silence, became a witness and a messenger to bring the world of the Holocaust to contemporaries who had not even begun to grasp its enormity, let alone its threat to the past, present, and future of Israel and of mankind? What blessing has enabled Wiesel to live with the past and yet not forsake the present? What room is there for affirmation in a witness such as he? What portion of rebellion is necessary that the witness remain true and the affirmation real? It is not just the presence of God in history which becomes questionable after Auschwitz, but the humanity of man, himself. The "eclipse of God" is also the "eclipse of the human."

Contending with God and with man is an essential ingredient of the witnessing of Wiesel — our modern messenger. The thick silence between the words in Wiesel's works is also integral to this witnessing. Wiesel's novels give repeated evidence of an all too understandable temptation to give up altogether the retelling of the story of the Holocaust because of the repeated realization of the futility of such a witness. Yet to do so would itself be a despairing rebellion which would be still more futile. After he had written ten books on the Holocaust and had declared in print that he would write of it no more, Wiesel wrote the novel *The Oath*, which transmutes the Holocaust of the past and the blindness of the present into a terrifying and totally destructive apocalyptic of the future. In this same novel it becomes clear, as in no other, that Wiesel's witness stands in a double tension with rebellion on the one side and silence on the other. In this dialectic, both rebellion and silence may be affirmation and both may be negation — just as witnessing to the Holocaust may itself be simultaneously negation and affirmation.

The third, doubly dialectical tension that runs through all that Wiesel has written and is integral to the other two is that between past and present. Here a double temptation has to be overcome — that of denying the present out of loyalty to the Holocaust past and that of gliding over the Holocaust too easily for the sake of affirmation and response in the present.

Perhaps the purest witness, because the simplest, is Wiesel's narration in *Night* of his life in Auschwitz and Buchenwald. When his mother and sister are metamorphosed into the smoke above the crematories, his witness is, if anything, against God rather than for Him:

Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my Faith forever. Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never.

Here is no denial of the existence of God but an unshakable resolve to hold out against God or against any affirmation that might be built on the dimming of the memory of what happened. God is metamorphosed, too, into the child with the sad face of an angel who is hanging in agony on the Nazi gallows because he is too light to die quickly, as the two adults did. Wiesel himself is metamorphosed. After his liberation at Buchenwald, when he looks at himself in a mirror, it is a corpse that gazes back at him. This, too, is a memory that cannot, will not, may not be dimmed: "The look in his eyes, as they stared into mine, has never left me."

Night might seem to conclude on a note of pure negation, of a rebellion which can in no way witness for God. Yet it is the matrix of all the volumes that follow, and without it such witness and affirmation as they attain would be a hollow mockery.

In *Dawn*, the tensions which are implicit in *Night* begin to be unfolded in their dialectical nature. The young boy who has gone to study philosophy at the Sorbonne in order to rediscover the human image that had been destroyed for him by the extermination camps, confronts unanswerable questions in which all of the swinging tensions are contained: "Where is God to be found? In suffering or in rebellion? When is a man most truly a man? When he submits or when he refuses? Where does suffering lead him? To purification or to bestiality?" Under the influence of Gad, a terrorist leader from Palestine who has sought him out in Paris, Elisha chooses rebellion. The "Movement" changes the destiny of the Jew from victim to executioner. But Elisha is not able to find the answer to his questions in terrorism any more than in philosophy. When he is assigned the task of shooting the English captain, in reprisal for the British hanging of one of their number, he feels that he has made murderers of all who were ever close to him, and that he, himself, has donned the field-gray uniform of the Nazi S.S. officer. The only affirmation that emerges from this situation is in spite of himself. During the hour of conversation with the hostage before he kills him, Elisha tries in vain to hate him, as if the coming of the Messiah were dependent upon the Jews' finally learning "to hate those who have humiliated" them and periodically exterminated them. If Elisha rediscovers God's presence, it is through the fatherly concern of his victim-to-be for this eighteen-year-old turned terrorist. But when he has completed the execution, Elisha feels that he has killed himself, that he himself has become the night.

In *The Accident*, the negative aspect of the tension between past and present comes fully into play. The nameless hero realizes after he is struck down by a taxi, that he could have avoided the incident, that he wanted,

and wants, to die, that even the “love” of his mistress, Kathleen, gives him no incentive to live in the present. He is one of the “spiritual cripples” who have lost not their legs or their eyes but their will and their taste for life, one of those who poison the air for those around them, taking away from joy its spontaneity and justification.

The cause of the present is championed by the hero's Hungarian painter friend, Gyula. During the years of their friendship, Gyula and he have encouraged each other not to come to terms with life through compromises or easy victories. Now Gyula confronts his friend's will to death with the silent offer of friendship, which calls him not to think of the dead, who no longer suffer, but of the living — Kathleen and himself — whose suffering he can help decrease. There is no doubt that Gyula's view is also that of the author. But the semi-autobiographical hero of the novel turns from this point of view to an identification of happiness with lies and of truth with death. When Gyula burns his portrait of the hero, the eyes of which are those of “a man who had seen God commit the most unforgivable crime: to kill without reason,” it is not the hero's *present* self that is threatened but that hero's image of his dead grandmother, who, he feels, is being burned for a second time. Only the prolonged tears that come to the eyes of the man who cannot weep presage the possibility of moving toward a life in the present.

In *The Town Beyond the Wall*, this same issue is joined between Michael and his friend, Pedro. This time it lies in the temptation to go mad and to escape from the confrontation with the present. What enables Michael to withstand the “prayers,” during which he has to stand for eight hours at a stretch before a wall without moving, eating, or drinking, is his loyalty to Pedro, the black marketeer who has got him back to his home village behind the “Iron Curtain,” and his many memories of the events of the Holocaust and their aftermath. In the end, it is the friendship of Pedro, internalized into dialogues with him while Michael is in prison, that saves Michael from the temptation to escape beyond all human limitations into madness. To keep our balance before this temptation, the “voice” of Pedro says, “is the most difficult and absurd struggle in human existence.” To shun the once-for-all liberation of the self which destroys all freedom is to remain within the human and to hold one's own against the Other, whatever it may be. Michael finds the alternative to madness in making himself responsible for his prison cellmate, a young boy who is completely silent and out of touch. In bringing Eliezer back into dialogue, Michael brings himself back to humanity. In keeping the question within the limits of humanity, Michael transforms his unlimited and self-destructive rebellion into the humanly limited rebellion of witness and affirmation. His question and the unknowable answer, which he intimately senses, remain at his own level, “in simple and honest conversation, in glances heavy with existence.”

The dialectical interactions of witness and rebellion, speech and

silence, laughter and madness, past and present are more complex and subtle in *The Gates of the Forest*, even as the structure of the book, with its four seasons and four settings, is more complex than any earlier Wiesel novel. Instead of one foil, as in *The Accident* and *The Town Beyond the Wall*, Gregor has two. The first of these is Gavriel, the only person to know the terrible truth that the Messiah has come and that the world has remained what it always was — an immense butchery. Gavriel's rebellion is his laughter in the face of the horror — a terrible, mad laugh that defies the absurd. Gregor's other foil is Leib the Lion, his boyhood friend who is now the leader of the Jewish partisans in the forest and who gives up his life in a vain attempt to liberate Gavriel from prison so that the latter may tell the partisans, in person, of that "final solution" that none of them had suspected. Gavriel is the incarnation of Moshe the Madman, who appears so regularly in Wiesel's novels and plays. Leib is a strong, heroic person, like Gyula and Pedro, someone whose rebellion is, itself, an affirmation and a witness. Every one of his words and gestures enriches hope with simplicity and humility. "We shall prevail, for inasmuch as it has any meaning, victory is within the domain of man and of that which elevates rather than denies him."

Gregor brings these two internalized voices with him into the final section of the book when he visits a Hasidic *rebbe* in postwar New York. In the course of this visit the rebellion of negation turns into one of affirmation. Gregor works his way through to the trust and contending of the Job of Auschwitz who meets the living present, including the absurd, with the courage that the "messengers on high" have bequeathed. When, out of suffering and pride, Gregor admits that what he wants is that the *rebbe* should howl instead of pray, the *rebbe*, with a movement of revolt, says to him: "Who has told you the force comes from a cry and not from prayer, from anger and not from compassion? . . . The man who sings is the brother of him who goes to his death fighting." The dancing, the singing, the joy of the Hasid are *in spite of* the fact that all reason for them has been taken from him.

"He's guilty; do you think I don't know it? That I have no eyes to see, no ears to hear? That my heart doesn't revolt? That I have no desire to beat my head against the wall and shout like a madman, to give rein to my sorrow and disappointment? Yes, he is guilty. He has become an ally of evil, of death, of murder, but the problem is still not solved."

Gregor's revolt has been unmasked by the *rebbe* as only a romantic gesture. It still leaves the question of what to do, of how to live, of the direction, if any, from which salvation and hope must come.

It is at this point that the doubly dialectical tension between past and present is once more made explicit. This time it is not the central figure but his wife, Clara, who denies the present — her relationship with Gregor — in order to remain loyal to the past — her first lover, the dead Leib. Caught in this tragic severance of past and present, Gregor has resolved to

do the reverse of what Clara has done. He will cut off the past for the sake of the present by leaving her and beginning a new life. But he overcomes this equal and opposite temptation after his talk with the Hasidic *rebbe* and his participation in a *minyán* that recites the *kaddish*, hallowing the God of the dead Gavriel and Leib and of the living Gregor and Clara. Now he knows that he will return to Clara, to take up again the battle of winning her back to the present, to life, without betraying either his faithfulness, or hers, to the past. If we will be sincere, humble, and strong, the Messiah will come every day; for he is not a single man but all men. When Clara learns to sing again and Gregor to weep, it will be the Messiah who sings and weeps in them.

In the stories and essays of *Legends of Our Time*, Wiesel states as explicitly as possible the relationship for him between witness and rebellion: the Job of Auschwitz "will always take the side of man confronted with the Absolute." God's presence, or His absence, at Treblinka or Maidanek, "poses a problem which will forever remain insoluble." Nor does it matter that "loss of faith for some equalled discovery of God for others," since "both answered the same need to take a stand, the same impulse to rebel. In both cases it was an accusation." Even the man who went laughing to his death after he had fasted on Yom Kippur, fasted as a Job of Auschwitz must fast: "Not out of obedience, but out of defiance." The accusation is not only against God, but against all peoples — the indigenous populations of Hungary and Poland whose eagerness to become *Judenrein* alone made it possible for "the cattle trains with their suffocating human cargo" to "roll swiftly into the night," the outside world that looked on in paralysis and passively allowed the murder of six million Jews — a number that would never have been reached had Roosevelt, Churchill, the Pope, the American Jewish community and the Jews of Palestine done everything in their power to prevent it. Humanity's witnesses of the Nazi "eclipse of God" became a subtle form of collaboration.

To some, including Carol Christ — one of the finest literary interpreters of Wiesel that I know — Wiesel's novel of the Six Day War, *A Beggar in Jerusalem*, is a "cop-out" which no longer holds in fruitful dialectic the tension between affirmation and rebellion. I can understand this view, since, in this book, the author allows himself to balance the fate of the Holocaust generation, who were robbed of everything, even cemeteries, with one of those rare victories that the Jews seem to have won in modern times. But I do not share this view. In *A Beggar in Jerusalem*, as in *The Oath*, any real "victory" over others is discounted since "He who kills, kills God. Each murder is a suicide of which the Eternal is essentially the victim." Still more important, this is the first novel in which, without denying the past, the author and his hero are able to live fully in the present. This present includes the past in two different ways: the overwhelming sense that such an extermination could not be allowed to

happen twice in one lifetime and the conviction that "Israel conquered because its army, its people included six million additional names." It is important to note here that Wiesel is no more justifying every act of the State of Israel because of the Holocaust than he is rationalizing the suffering and absurdity of the Holocaust because of the existence of the State of Israel. It is significant, too, that in the books that follow — the essays of *One Generation After*, the novel, *The Oath*, the cantata, *Ani Ma'amin*, and the play, *Zalman, the Madman of God* — the tension between witness and rebellion, affirmation and accusation returns in full force.

In the Holocaust, man betrayed his image, Wiesel asserts in *One Generation After*. Here, the Job of Auschwitz howls in protest against the wall of death that crushed a whole people, hopes against hope that someone will listen to his recounting, upbraids the young Germans of the New Left who do not despise their guilty fathers, insists that if God is an answer, it must be the wrong answer, and recognizes that he is *required* to challenge God. One can say no to God "as long as it is for man, not against him, as long as one remains inside the covenant," choosing to be a link "between the primary silence of creation and the silence that weighed on Treblinka." "There can be no theme more human, no project more universal." But this witness is made with "restrained, harnessed anger, free of sterile bitterness." It is also made with the recognition that often such witness seems a mistake, that no one listens and nothing is learned. The raconteur realizes, in anguish, that he cannot "approach this universe of darkness without turning into a peddler of night and agony." Yet, the story must be told for the sake of our children; for only in again and again facing the dead, can we "see among them, beyond all contradiction and absurdity, . . . a beginning of promise." Only in the Dialogue with the Absurd can trust and meaning be found.

It is precisely this tension between the powerful urge to keep silent and the equally powerful call to witness that forms the heart of Wiesel's most recent novel, *The Oath*, which gradually reveals itself as the most terrifying of his works in its suggestion of the possibility of the permanent eclipse of the hidden human image, the destruction of mankind through senseless hatred and ultimate stupidity. Just before this total destruction, Moshe the Madman makes all the Jews of Kolvilläg take a solemn oath never again to take on the task of being mankind's memory and heart by telling of the massacres and exterminations of the Jews — a task that former generations of Jews had hoped might forestall future abominations.

The apocalyptic terror *and* the power of the oath can be overcome only by that unique combination of rebellion and witness that mark the Job of Auschwitz. This rebellious witness is in the spirit of Moshe himself who, beaten into unconsciousness by a sadistic sergeant, says to himself, "Nothing justifies suffering," but "nobody is required to explain it, only to fight it. . . . To die for God is to die against God. For us, man's ultimate

confrontation is only with God." Demanding that he live to the limit, Moshe tells the boy, Azriel, "Whoever walks in the night, moves against the night." It is in this same spirit of fighting suffering and death that Azriel, the sole survivor, breaks his oath as an old man to save the life of a young boy who has confessed to him that he is planning suicide. "I am not telling you not to despair of man," Azriel says, "but not to offer death . . . one more victory." Every death is ugly, useless, absurd. To triumph over suffering and death one must begin by saving one's brother.

Thus, the unresolved tension is meaningful in its very unresolvedness. It is, in fact, the only possible meaning; for witness and rebellion must necessarily go together. To meet the other is also to hold one's ground against him or her. To hold one's ground against the other is also to meet the other. "The 'I' signifies both solitude and rejection of solitude." In saying "I" we create the "you," writes Wiesel. Once the "you" is created, the "I" cannot separate itself from it any longer. This inseparable binding of "I" and "you" traps the conscience of the witness, in Wiesel's words, or, as I should rather say, authenticates it.

Popularizing the Esoteric: Recent Studies in Jewish Mysticism

Review-Essay by LAWRENCE FINE

Kabbalah, The Way of the Jewish Mystic. By PERLE EPSTEIN. New York. Doubleday and Company Inc., 1978. 171 pp. \$6.95.

Jewish Mystical Testimonies. By LOUIS JACOBS. New York. Schocken Books, 1977. 270 pp. \$7.95 (Paperback).

Understanding Jewish Mysticism, A Source Reader. By DAVID R. BLUMENTHAL. New York. KTAV, 1978. 196 pp. (Paperback).

Your Word is Fire, The Hasidic Masters on Contemplative Prayer. Edited and translated by ARTHUR GREEN and BARRY W. HOLTZ. New York. Paulist Press, 1977. 133 pp. \$1.95 (Paperback).

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY a fierce and bitter dispute erupted within the Italian rabbinate over a proposal to print the *Zohar*. One of the issues at stake in this controversy was whether it was wise to expose esoteric teachings to the public at large. Might not widespread accessibility to mysticism lure the uninitiated and unprepared towards matters with which they had best not concern themselves? Isaac de Lattes, vigorously supporting the publishing plan, drew upon a conception found in the *Zohar* itself to the effect that the people Israel would merit redemption by virtue of studying this book. Ultimately, that classical work of the Jewish mystical tradition was printed in Mantua (1558-60) and Cremona (1559-60) by competing publishers.

Today the question, at least for most, is not so much *whether* to expose to the masses the literature of the mystical tradition, as it is *how* to make available such knowledge to the many who are interested. While the question of how to popularize the findings of scholars is unlikely to generate violent dispute, it is, nevertheless, an intriguing and important one. Kabbalah was long considered esoteric in the sense that it constituted a deeper level of knowledge as compared to other means of interpreting Torah, and in the sense that this knowledge was held to be appropriate for only the elite. Despite the successful efforts to democratize and disseminate knowledge of Kabbalah in the sixteenth century, there always remained dimensions of mystical teachings which were closed to all but a few. In our own time, Jewish mystical tradition remains esoteric to the extent that a genuine understanding requires familiarity with complex theosophical and mythological schema, not to mention a degree of natural sympathy for things mystical. This is true despite the extraordinary achievements of Gershom Scholem and others in setting forth, in a critical

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way, some of the major aspects of Jewish mysticism. To make what is esoteric meaningful and comprehensible to individuals who are unfamiliar with the languages in which the original texts were written, who are unaccustomed to thoroughly symbolic modes of thinking and who are wary of matters that cannot be seen or touched, constitutes the difficult set of tasks confronting the authors whose work is reviewed here.

Though it provides no indication as to its plan or intentions, *Kabbalah, The Way of the Jewish Mystic*, by Perle Epstein, is designed for the non-scholarly reader. A highly popularized account of its subject, *Kabbalah* ranges over the entire history of the mystical tradition, all within one hundred and seventy-one pages.

Ms. Epstein's book is characterized by three major shortcomings. In the first place, it lacks coherent organization. Although formally divided into three sections — mystic life, kabbalistic practices and cleaving to God — each part actually contains the same sort of material that is found in the other two. For example, all three sections treat matters of kabbalistic practice. Moreover, the author moves back and forth between historical periods with no rational transitions. Thus, we are given discussions of sixteenth century Kabbalah in each of the three sections. Were the thematic divisions meaningful ones, such fragmentation might be acceptable. Given the somewhat arbitrary character of the organization, such skipping and jumping is rather confusing.

Second, the book is replete with inaccuracies of various types. Basic matters of fact are frequently incorrect. We are told, for example, that Isaac Luria's "tenure lasted only six years" in Safed, whereas, in fact, Luria spent only two years in that city. We learn that the kabbalistic synagogue of Bet El in Jerusalem goes back to the sixteenth century, whereas it was actually founded in the eighteenth. Though these errors are annoying, more distressing is the author's penchant for filling in details about the lives of masters and the practices of their disciples where historical evidence simply does not exist. She relies on legendary evidence with no concern whatsoever for issues of historicity. Thus, to use the example of sixteenth century Safed again, we are offered a thoroughly romanticized, idealized depiction of what life was like there. We are told that, "modeled on the Essene commune system, life in Safed represented the perfect socialist ideal of co-operation" (p. 11). Similarly, we read that when Joseph Karo arrived in Safed, "he found an entire town devoted primarily to spiritual life and only incidentally to earning a living," where "citizens distributed charity daily; orphans were immediately adopted and raised by more fortunate families; holidays were entirely communal, entirely mystical occasions for rejoicing" (p. 15). On another level, *Kabbalah* offers little in the way of lucid exposition of kabbalistic ideas or practices. The uninitiated reader will find it exceedingly difficult to make sense of material which is too frequently sketchy and which provides no contextual framework, historical or otherwise, with which to assimilate it.

Finally, Ms. Epstein indulges in the practice of generalizing about Jewish mystics and mysticism in ways that are not especially enlightening.

... the mystic, now filled with a lover's yearning for a glimpse of the beloved — is prepared to reflect a vision of the Absolute. Though it is not yet classified as "union," this stage ... is a very elevated one. The mystic no longer feels himself to be a minute, insignificant creature separated by eons in space and time from his Creator ... (p. 34).

To which mystics does this generalization apply? To those who envisioned the throne of God in the period of the Talmud, to those who practiced the ecstatic mysticism of Abraham Abulafia in the thirteenth century, to the eighteenth century Hasidim of Eastern Europe? Such generalizations offer no particular insight into the varieties and complexities of the mystical tradition.

In Louis Jacobs' *Jewish Mystical Testimonies* we are presented, in translation, with texts by a wide assortment of authors representing many different mystical approaches. Jacobs has brought together texts which deal specifically with Jewish mystical *experience*, prefaces each one with an introductory comment and follows it with generally brief, elucidatory notes.

This book is an anthology of personal mystical testimonies, peak religious experiences, examples of ecstatic prayer and the like ... These texts have not been chosen haphazardly but as the main examples we have of this genre (p. 9).

Jacobs aptly dwells on the fact that personal mystical accounts are relatively rare within the corpus of Jewish literature, pointing to Gershom Scholem's observation that Jewish mystics have tended to refrain from mystical autobiography out of "a particularly vivid sense of the incongruity between mystical experience and that idea of God which stresses the aspects of Creator, King and Lawgiver." It is the case, nevertheless, that we possess quite a number of documents which do evidence the variety of mystical experiences — as well as aspirations for them — in which Kabbalists and other mystics indulged. A significant portion of these materials are extant only in manuscript form, having been considered unfit by the Kabbalists themselves for the public exposure which printing surely would bring. For example, all of the writings of that prominent contemplative of the thirteenth century, Abraham Abulafia, fall into this category. While we possess numerous manuscript copies of Abulafian texts — attesting to their popularity and use — virtually nothing of this large corpus has been published. Other books following the Abulafian tradition, such as *Sha'arei Sedek*, Judah Albotinni's *Sullam ha-'Aliyah*, Joseph ibn Sayah's *Eben ha-Shoham* have likewise circulated in manuscript only. The unprinted fourth chapter of Hayyim Vital's *Sha'arei Kedushah* is a striking example of this sort of internal censorship on the part of the Kabbalists.

Each of these works is a precious jewel to the student of Kabbalah who is interested in Jewish mystical experience. They provide us, however reluctantly and tantalizingly, with the possibility of learning about a dimension of religious experience which, until recently, has been generally ignored. Though the answer is by no means clear, it is tempting to ask why the overwhelming portion of contemporary scholarship has been devoted to presenting the objective, or discursive, aspects of Kabbalism, to the virtual exclusion of matters having to do with mystical experience. Despite the aforementioned facts — the relative paucity of texts of this kind and the predominantly manuscript state in which they are found — one wonders whether the reticence of the mystics themselves has not extended to those who have taken up the challenge of studying this literature historically. Perhaps, like Jewish mystics, the few scholars in this field have themselves felt on surer ground in the detailed exposition of ideas and symbols.

In the light of all this, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies* is, indeed, a work which should be enthusiastically welcomed. It serves to focus deserved attention, not merely on the fact that the history of mysticism has been characterized by personal mystical experience, but, also, on the fact that those experiences cover a broad range of esoteric possibilities.

Thus, for example, we read of Abraham Abulafia's technique of combining divine names in order to stimulate the mind to higher wisdom, to pierce the veil of natural forms and to sever all relations with the senses for the sake of engendering ecstatic visions. We learn of Joseph Karo's ability to induce the audition of his mentor-angel, a *maggid*, who revealed personal and kabbalistic *gnosis* as a consequence of Karo's repetition of *mishnayot*. Or of Hayyim Vital's practice of *yihudim* as taught by his teacher, Isaac Luria, as well as his own technique of inducing visions and auditions by contemplatively isolating himself through the repetition of *mishnayot*. We are introduced to the intricate *kavvanot* (meditative intentions) of Shalom Sharabi and the mystics of Jerusalem's Bet El synagogue — since 1737 a community which has practiced the most esoteric forms of meditation patterned after the Abulafian and Lurianic traditions. Likewise, we read of Israel Baal Shem Tov's ecstatic visions of departed souls, rabbinic masters and the Messiah himself.

The range of texts found here, as well as the presence of certain ones not normally understood as being mystical in character, raises two related questions. What is mysticism and what constitutes Jewish mystical experience? Jacobs acknowledges the problem of definition:

For our purposes . . . Jewish mysticism can be defined as that aspect of the Jewish religious experience in which man's mind is in direct encounter with God (p. 1).

The problem with this definition is that it raises more issues than it settles. Even if, as we are told, most varieties of mystical experience are char-

acterized by strong intellectual content, is this the dominant character of such experiences? What of those cases where there appears to be little or no intellectual component, as with Eleazar Azikri of Safed? What of those experiences of some other aspect of the sacred, such as seems to be the case with the phenomenon of maggidism or communion with a departed rabbi? Are experiences which involve some personal vision or revelation, but which do not otherwise have any particularly mystical component, to be considered as mystical? To ask these and similar questions is to be concerned with finding means by which to understand the *nature* of mystical experience. Consideration of two texts in this volume will serve as a means of exploring this issue a bit further.

Jacobs explains his inclusion of a passage from Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, III, 51 in this way:

Although Maimonides' statement is in the form of an objective presentation, it is clear that he is not only drawing on his personal experience but is offering guidance for his pupil to follow his footsteps. Seen in this way, as it should be, the statement is a kind of manual for the attainment of the lower degrees of prophecy . . . The conventional understanding of Maimonides as the supreme rationalist and philosopher requires considerable qualifications (pp. 5, 35).

Now, this is a very interesting problem, and one wishes that Jacobs had brought the authority of his vast knowledge to the task of arguing this point of view. In what ways does the experience that Maimonides points to resemble what the medieval mystics meant by prophetic inspiration? By what standards are we to measure whether Maimonides' notion of prophecy is, in some sense, mystical?

In a somewhat different way, the inclusion of passages from *Responsa From Heaven*, by Jacob of Marvege, raises the issue of how we are to understand mystical experience. This book, from which the excerpts were taken, is a collection of legal responsa in which the decisions were reached through the author's submission of dream-questions to "heaven." While the technique involved was used by some kabbalists for purposes of attaining visions and auditions, in the case of Jacob of Marvege the goal is purely non-mystical in character. He stands within no mystical tradition, is unconcerned with esoteric symbols and images and seeks no mystical knowledge. Does, then, his use of this unusual technique in the service of solving legal questions constitute mystical experience?

Jewish Mystical Testimonies is a very valuable book with fine translations which the scholar, student and layman will all be able to enjoy. Given its restricted goals, it has left unanswered some difficult and important questions. At the same time it will, by its very presence, provoke interest in these issues and will serve as a basis for discussion of the personal dimension in Jewish mysticism.

Like the Jacobs book, *Understanding Jewish Mysticism*, by David Blumenthal, presents texts in translation. Unlike that one, however, its

author has two additional goals. He seeks to explain the text to the reader through the use of substantial commentary, and to deal with "some general questions about the nature of Jewish mysticism." Blumenthal pursues these three goals in several ways. First, he has chosen to include texts from only two major traditions within the history of Jewish mysticism, the Merkabah or Throne mysticism of the rabbinic period, and the Zoharic tradition (which, for our author, includes the work of Isaac Luria in the sixteenth century). He deals with the goals of explication and analysis in a somewhat complicated way. For each of the two units he presents a general introduction and a doctrinal summary (which is drawn from the writing of George Vajda in the case of the Merkabah tradition and from Gershom Scholem for the Zoharic tradition). Each translation within a unit is then introduced, presented with commentary and followed by a conclusion. Finally, the unit as a whole is discussed. While one appreciates the author's intentions, the complexity of this format leads to some confusion and choppy flow in the book. Not only must the substance of the book be studied carefully, but the structure itself demands a degree of investigation before it becomes clear. Perhaps underlying this complex format is the fact that this book is intended to be a teaching device. By asking and responding to a range of significant questions on several different levels — historical, linguistic, analytical, psychological — the author takes the reader along the path that a university student might be asked to follow.

In the unit dealing with Merkabah mysticism, the texts of the *Sefer Yesira* (*Book of Creation*) and portions of *Heikhalot Rabbati* (*The Greater Heikhalot*) are presented. *Sefer Yesira* is the earliest extant Hebrew text of systematic and speculative thought. Written sometime between the third and sixth centuries, it is a discourse on cosmological matters in which the author describes how God created the world by means of "32 secret paths of wisdom." These paths, the fundamental building-blocks of creation, include ten *sefirot* or numbers, and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. *Sefer Yesira* played an important role in the history of Jewish cosmological speculation — philosophical and mystical. Utilizing several earlier German and English translations, Blumenthal has given us his own fresh reading of this exceedingly obscure text.

The *Heikhalot* literature — of which *Heikhalot Rabbati* is a part — is an esoteric body of literature, produced by normative rabbis of the Talmudic period. Here we find extraordinary descriptions of visionary ascent through the seven heavens and the various palaces of which they are comprised, until one reaches the very throne of God. We also find numinous hymns of an ecstatic character which served to facilitate this visionary ascent and which, at the same time, suggest the vision experienced by the successful adept.

The author's running commentary on these works is generally quite informative and will help the reader penetrate many of their com-

plexities. It seems reasonable to ask, however, whether these particular books are the most appropriate choices for a work of this kind. Although it is true that they are significant treatises within the history of Jewish mystical tradition, it is also true that they are among the more obscure and arcane documents available to us. They are, in many ways, some of the *least accessible* texts, even in translation, and will be difficult to relate to by the individuals seeking *entrance* to the world of mysticism. In a book which is clearly designed to introduce non-scholarly readers and university-level students to Jewish mysticism, there may be other kinds of material which would have been more valuable. One reason why the author chose to devote half of his book to this tradition is undoubtedly related to his assertion that "in some ways this book is intended as a reader to supplement the history of ideas presented by Scholem" (in that author's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*). Scholem's *magnum opus* is organized in a chronological fashion, moving from the beginnings of mystical practice in the period of the Talmud through the Hasidic movement in the eighteenth century. Is it possible that all of us who are so fundamentally indebted to this great scholarly work are also mesmerized by it to the degree that we do not easily break out of its orientation?

In the second unit, which covers the Zoharic tradition, Blumenthal offers seven texts from the *Zohar* itself and a page from the Lurianic-based prayerbook of the great eighteenth century Yemenite Kabbalist, Rabbi Shalom Sharabi. As in the first unit, the author raises important and thoughtful questions regarding the ways in which to analyze the text. These ought to be extremely useful in helping the student approach the passages in an intelligent manner. In his introductory section, called "How to Decipher a Zoharic Text," Blumenthal indicates that the reader must tune into the several layers on which the text exists: identification of the idiosyncratic aspect of the Biblical passage which gives rise to discussion and Kabbalistic exegesis, rabbinic interpretation, the explication of Kabbalistic symbolism itself, and "the consideration of the meaning of the text." In this final and highest level of concern, the author has in mind psychological categories with which we are to interpret the *Zohar*. Thus, he asks: "Does the sefirotic interaction described have a true analogy in the workings of human consciousness?" Although I agree that the reader must ultimately relate the text to personal experience, I am reluctant to reduce, and restrict, such an exercise to psychological terms. By giving his own psychological explanation of each of these passages, the author unduly confines the reader to one particular point of view. One of the more remarkable characteristics of the *Zohar* is precisely its capacity to stir the imagination and set free our overly repressed inclination to fantasize. Blumenthal might have avoided this problem by offering his explanation as an *example* of the kind of thinking that the *Zohar* should prompt. In regard to the text from Shalom Sharabi's prayer-book, the reader is confronted with material that is intricate and complicated in the extreme.

Given the enormously technical nature of Lurianic contemplation, it will be very difficult for the uninitiated to make sense of this passage.

These reservations notwithstanding, David Blumenthal has provided us with a thoughtful and useful volume. It is, like any worthy teacher, provocative in the sense that it asks for serious thinking about serious matters.

Several years ago, a young lady, aroused by a budding personal interest in the subject of Jewish mysticism while visiting Jerusalem, sought out Gershom Scholem for advice concerning where to turn. During their conversation Scholem offered the titles of some books that he thought would interest her and help her along her path. Curiously, none of his own many works were included in the suggestions. The preeminent scholar of Kabbalah was sufficiently wise to recognize the particular needs of his inquirer, and to realize that scholarly analyses of historical data were not the sort of spiritual sustenance that she was seeking.

Not all seekers are as fortunate to find such guidance. The contemporary Jew in pursuit of serious spiritual quest may quickly run into trouble when he turns to books for religious nourishment. Scholarly books abound on virtually every subject of Judaica, filling our bookstores and libraries. Far less abundant are volumes which offer authentic spiritual direction. Of those that do purport to be of a devotional nature, few possess genuine inspirational power.

Your Word is Fire is one important response to that need for devotional works of stature and significance — works that breathe life into the rich sources of Jewish tradition. Arthur Green and Barry Holtz have edited a small volume of Hasidic texts on contemplative prayer, culled from twenty nine classical Hasidic books and divided into ten sections. The body of texts is preceded by a short introduction and followed by notes. Despite the brief notes, the authors tell us that

[t]he primary purpose of the present translation is devotional rather than academic. We offer these texts for the enrichment of the personal religious lives of our readers, for use as readings in the context of worship, and as a source of inspiration to those who seek to uncover the oneness of religious truth behind the garb of various mystical traditions.

The final part of the above quotation is appropriate for a book on Jewish pietism published, ironically enough, by a well-known Catholic press.

We suspect that Gershom Scholem will smile, and Abraham Joshua Heschel would have smiled, on this little book. Scholem, the scholar's scholar, will probably agree that the texts are well-chosen, carefully translated, and representative of normative Hasidism. Heschel, a person in whose soul the Hasidic way was alive, would surely have felt in these translations the power and inner vitality of Hasidic spirituality. That the editors may have simultaneously satisfied the historian and one who seeks His Presence, is no light achievement.

Different kinds of books require different kinds of reading. To some

works our attitude is one of I-It. With these we tend to dash about, trying to extract useful information, to peruse casually or, perhaps, to seek amusement. With other books, our attitude is one of I-Thou. Here we are called upon to ponder gently and ultimately to meet the text in a deeply contemplative manner. It is clear that *Your Word is Fire* asks of us such an attitude. For the editors, these short texts are meditative poems that, by their nature, are intended to stir the reader and speak to the soul. Consider, for example, a passage from the section entitled: "Meet Him in the Word."

Think that the letters of prayer
are the garments of God.
What a joy to be making a garment
for the greatest of kings!
Enter into every letter with all your strength,
God dwells within each letter;
as you enter it, you become one with Him.

For Green and Holtz, the texts do not merely tell us *about* prayer, nor do they simply inform us about the significance of the sacred word spoken with all one's heart and soul. They are *themselves* sacred words, prayer-texts, meditation-poems. If, for the Hasidim, God's presence fills each letter and word of prayer, for the translators these Hasidic reflections on prayer are themselves filled with holy strength, intended to kindle our inner lives.

Nearly all of the central themes of Hasidic piety are present in these texts: interiority, intensity of devotion, joyfulness, power of word and deed, spontaneity of worship, immanence of God and attachment to God. But the striking motif which flows throughout these passages is the radical demand to loosen the bonds of spiritual passivity and security. The masters seem to be saying: "Dare to give up the comfortable contours of earthly existence for the shapelessness and holy insecurity of seeking God's Presence!" Authentic prayer is always accompanied by risk, by the anxiety of ascent. This anxiety is rooted in the view that man's soul must renounce the limitations of corporeality:

The human body is always finite;
It is the spirit that is boundless.
Before he begins to pray,
a person should cast aside that which limits him
and enter the endless world of Nothing
In prayer he should turn to God alone
and have no thoughts of himself at all.
Nothing but God exists for him;
he himself has ceased to be.
The true redemption of man's soul can only happen
as he steps outside the body's limits.

Such are the dangers and so great is the strength required in prayer that:

Before you begin to pray,
decide that you are ready to die
in that very prayer.

And what is the potential reward for the person who takes such risks?
Nothing less than the deepest joy and the loving attachment to God's light:

Can there be a greater joy than speaking face to face
with the Eternal King, the life of every soul?
Of such moments scripture says:
"Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth."

While it is true, as the book's introduction indicates, that Hasidic prayer is marked by its simplicity, in contrast to the immense symbolic and mythical complexity of Lurianic devotion, it is important to make clear the kind of simplicity with which we are confronted. It is a simplicity that borders on spiritual anarchy, a joy mixed with trembling. To be sure, the Hasidic masters who crossed this boundary are those who fascinate and challenge man the most. Both Nahman of Bratslav and Menahem Mendel of Kotzk attract us and yet make us wary, precisely because their lives call to mind the combined awesomeness and joyfulness that is always associated with entering His Presence. (It is certainly no accident that both the Bratslaver and Kotzker were dedicated to solitude. Each knew that devotional solitude involved untold risks as well as infinite opportunities.) Though these two masters represent the anxiety of ascent in the extreme, a mystical "courage to be," the same impulse underlies the contemplative teachings represented in *Your Word is Fire*.

What is important about this book, then, is that these passages — translated with vitality and strength — spiritually unsettle the reader, arousing him and leading him in new directions. Similarly, it raises difficult questions concerning the nature of contemporary devotion. Is prayer meaningful when little or nothing is at stake? What inner resources does a person bring to prayer? How open are contemporary Jews to becoming transformed through prayer? How willing and how able are today's rabbis to awaken and channel individual and collective spiritual energy?

According to Hasidism, as the authors tell us, "there is no higher sacred act than that of helping another to discover the presence of God within his own soul." Some readers will discover that Arthur Green and Barry Holtz have themselves performed just such an act.

An Early Sephardi Zionist

Rabbi Yisrael Moshe Hazzan: The Man and His Works. By JOSE FAUR. Haifa. Raphael Arbel Academic Press, 1978. xvii+190 pp.

Reviewed by ETAN LEVINE

ALTHOUGH HIS NAME is largely unknown in today's Ashkenazi world, Rabbi Yisrael Moshe Hazzan (b. Ismir 1807, d. Beirut 1863) was regarded by his Sephardi contemporaries as their most prominent theologian, rabbinic scholar and philosopher. Furthermore, as a publicist confronting the perils of the emerging European enlightenment, he had no equal in the Sephardi world of his day. It is, therefore, most gratifying to find a worthy study of this major figure by Professor Jose Faur of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, himself a spiritual descendant of Hazzan.

This book consists of an Introduction in English, followed by two Hebrew sections. The first is divided into seven chapters: The Life and Times of Rabbi Hazzan; The Character of Jewish Religious Humanism; Continuing the Tradition of Jewish Religious Humanism in Modern Times; The Function and Objectives of the Rabbinate; European Jewry: Extremism and Disintegration; On the Relations Between Jews and Non-Jews; Jewish Autonomy: Unity and Dissent. The second section is a critical edition of three previously unpublished parts of Hazzan's long work entitled *Iyye Ha-Yam*.

In a previous work (*Studies in the Mishne Torah Of Maimonides*, Jerusalem, 1977), Faur both indicts and corrects contemporary scholars who do not (can not?) adequately analyze the Sephardi jurid-

ical, conceptual, or linguistic elements which served as the context of Maimonides' writings. In this book, Faur provides background data and contextual specifics. What he most emphasizes is the traditional Sephardi emphasis upon autonomy: self-government according to their own laws and values, and the ordering of their conduct according to their own criteria and interests. In the Sephardi tradition, *galut* or "exile" is primarily a political concept. "In its barest form it means that the Jewish nation was not dissolved with the territorial loss of its homeland. . . . [T]he Sephardim viewed themselves as members of the Jewish nation rather than of the Jewish religion" (p. 4).

Rabbi Yisrael Moshe Hazzan advocated what Faur calls (for lack of a better designation) Religious Humanism, as the only viable alternative to the erosive effects of the Enlightenment's Rational Secularism. He warned of the dangers that the Enlightenment posed to the Jewish People, and, long before the advent of political Zionism, was an articulate advocate of Jewish national autonomy, the revival of the Hebrew language, and even the establishment of a fund to secure land for a Jewish home in Erez Yisrael. Thus, decades before the Zionism of Herzl *et al*, Hazzan formulated and urged the basics for cultural-political Zionism.

In stressing the importance of autonomy to the Sephardi communities, Faur observes that,

This point has escaped the attention of Jewish scholars who are quick to describe the position of the Jew in Moslem lands as that of a "second-rate citizen" without taking into consideration the fact that in these countries the Jew never wanted to forfeit his own national autonomy.

... [D]emand for citizenship from the host government meant the recognition of that government as the supreme legal and political authority of the Jews. ... Christians who favored granting citizenship to the Jews demanded, as a condition *sine qua non*, the abolition of the Jewish nation. Otherwise, to grant citizenship to the Jew would be as ridiculous as granting citizenship to a foreign citizen. The modern Jew who is a citizen of the U.S.A. or U.S.S.R. enjoys the political freedom of other citizens, but he does not enjoy Jewish autonomy as did the Jewish communities in Moslem lands who had their own courts of justice, were judged by their own laws, paid taxes as an independent corporation, and maintained their own penal and educational systems. From the point of view of National autonomy, emancipation is a betrayal of the highest interest and ideals of the Jewish Nation. Unless one maintains, as the Jews in Moslem lands did, that we are an autonomous Nation, it makes no juridical sense to claim a National right to the Holy Land (p. 7.)

In his Introduction, Faur celebrates the tenacity with which the Sephardim clung to their faith in the face of unrelenting and often cruel repression. Thus, he quotes the admonition of Diego Annunziano Justiniano, Archbishop of Craganor, in a sermon delivered to the victims of the *Auto de Fe* held in Lisbon on September, 1705:

You are a people whose patience has never been exhausted by long-protracted hope, to whose minds the clearest evidence does not bring conviction, whom the severest suffering only disposes the more inveterately to persist in your obstinacy. Chastisement that softens brutes only makes you more stubborn. Evidence that convinces fools only makes you more positive. Hope that wearies the spirit of others makes you more enduring (p. 9).

Of the various incidents cited, I think that the most revealing con-

cerns the response of Balthazar Lopez, a victim of an *Auto de Fe* held in June 1654. As the executioner was completing his grisly task, a priest approached Lopez and inquired whether he was truly repentant and had accepted Christianity as the true faith. Looking directly into the priest's eyes, Lopez replied, "Father, do you think that this is the right time to joke?"

There is no doubt that the political thinking of Rabbi Yisrael Moshe Hazzan reflects the experiences of Sephardi Jewry at the hands of their Moslem and Christian "hosts." The same statement could be made about many Sephardic leaders cited by Faur: persons who sensed that authentic national autonomy in modern times could not be achieved without the establishment of a Jewish homeland. Faur cites Rabbi Yehuda Bibas (1780-1852) who, in 1821, considered the Greek War of Emancipation from the Turks a worthy model to be followed by the Jewish nation; Rabbi Yehudah Alkalai (1798-1879), who developed the idea of the "political repentance of Israel" as an obligation which could be fulfilled only by the return of the Jewish People to its land; diplomats and men of vast financial resources such as Count Abraham de Camondo (1785-1873) and Shema'ya Angel who helped their coreligionists emigrate to Israel; Abigail Abarbanel Lindo (1803-1848) and Grace Aguilar (1816-1847) who advocated the revival of the Hebrew language as a means of furthering Jewish unity and autonomy. The list is long: Rabbi Gershon Mendes Seixas (1746-1816), Judah Touro (1775-1854) and Mordechai Emmanuel Noah (1785-1851) are but the better known of those Sephardi Jews who recognized and advocated the national dimension of Judaism.

As intimated above, Rabbi Yisrael Moshe Hazzan was a multi-

faceted man, involved in Jewish theology, jurisprudence and philosophy, as well as communal affairs. Thus, Professor Faur's work is necessarily a multi-faceted work. The general reader will be most interested in the communal dimension: how Sephardim reacted to the age of "Enlightenment," and how their particular forms of Jewish autonomy, normative law, ethnicity and proto-Zionism developed. If nothing else, this study is a valuable contribution in dispelling the myth that Zionism is an exclusively Ashkenazi invention. Lest this reminder be considered unnecessary, let us recall that to this day we speak of "The First Aliyah," "The Second Aliyah," etc. — the movement of Ashkenazi Jews only, as though our Sephardi brethren didn't exist, or didn't emigrate to Israel at all!

From Judaism to Americanism

Judaism and the American Idea. By MILTON KONVITZ. Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University Press, 1978. \$9.95.

Reviewed by LAWRENCE J. EPSTEIN

MILTON R. KONVITZ is, by conviction, a mediator. Where other observers write of conflicts, he searches out the harmonies.

In this book he considers those two ideas which are the indivisible bases of his self-understanding: Judaism and the American Idea. The book is a testimony of faith in those ideas and an examination of their relationship. The author believes that the seminal religious ideas of Judaism constitute the genuine root from which flowered the American Idea.

Konvitz starts with the premise that there is an "American Idea" serving not only as a transcendent principle useful for legal guidance, but, also, as a religious and spiritual

ideal to strive for. Tracing the existence of such an American Idea to Emerson and Theodore Parker, Konvitz is satisfied to rely on Parker's analysis of the Idea as containing three simple elements: people have inalienable rights, people are created equal, and people should have equal opportunity to enjoy those rights.

As Konvitz reports on Whitman's formulation of the Idea, a connection becomes apparent between it and the religious ideas of the Biblical Hebrews; the Idea is really American-Hebraic.

The essays in this book flesh out the intimate links between Judaism and the American Idea in the legal and moral areas of: human dignity, the rule of law, the democratic ideal, conscience, rights, and the pursuit of happiness.

When commenting on human dignity, Konvitz concludes that our liberty comes from the religious notion that humans are created by God, not by the State, and, therefore, the definition of a human includes more than does the definition of a citizen.

When Konvitz compares the Torah to the Constitution, he concludes that both documents contain a commitment to the rule of law. The democratic ideal is one that embraces equality, dignity, and freedom. Konvitz suggests that these values are at the very heart of Judaism because a central Judaic precept is the equality of all people before God.

Konvitz also discusses the complex Jewish notion of conscience, which he finds in the belief that Jews must accept death rather than commit the sins of murder, incest, or idolatry. He believes that this principle of moral law taking precedence over civil law is the basis of those modern moral conflicts in which people commit civil disobedience to protest a civil law.

Konvitz argues that the Jewish

emphasis on group consciousness, as opposed to individual conscience, led to a natural transition from organizations that were devoted exclusively to Jewish rights to those that were concerned with the fundamental human rights of all people. This universal concern, he suggests, is a model for a culturally pluralistic society. Finally, Konvitz believes that the truths of Judaism cohere with those American self-evident truths of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Konvitz writes with lucidity and concern about those ideas that he finds animating. He has done a convincing job of showing just how close the relationship is between Judaism and the American Idea.

Most of the criticisms to which the book is subject center around the differences between Judaism and the American Idea, but since Konvitz is seeking a link, rather than an identity, and does imply that there *are* differences, such criticisms are irrelevant.

Unfortunately, Konvitz restricts his definition of Judaism to include only the religious element. It would have been interesting to see how he would connect the non-religious elements of Judaism, such as literature, the philosophical tradition, and the life-cycle, to the American Idea. That he restricts Judaism to its religious elements emphasizes his understanding of ethical monotheism as the vital Jewish idea.

Konvitz is susceptible to the charge that he is an idealist, that he overemphasizes the role of ideas, at the expense of the impact of political and economic conflicts, in forging civilizations and that by doing so he paints too simplistic a picture of how a civilization evolves and too pleasant a picture of the system of American justice.

Against such a charge, Konvitz might cheerfully admit to his interpretation of the meaning of

human history, and, less cheerfully, remind critics that his interpretation is a much-needed corrective for those theorists who trivialize both America's commitment to democratic thought and democratic thought itself.

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Distinguished Lectures

Tradition and Change in Jewish Experience. The B. G. Rudolph Lectures in Judaic Studies. Ed. by A. Leland Jamison. Syracuse. Syracuse University Press, 1978. xvi + 272 pp.

Reviewed by BERNARD MARTIN

IT IS RARELY a highly edifying experience to review a volume consisting of various papers written by various people at various times on various subjects. The verdict that generally has to be rendered is: "a mixed bag." That verdict, in my judgment, must be applied to the present volume. Some of the essays are excellent, some are mediocre, some are trivial.

The B. G. Rudolph annual lectures were made possible by a gift in 1963 to Syracuse University by a local affluent Jewish merchant who himself had some serious scholarly interests and wrote a worthwhile account of the origins and development of the Jewish community of Syracuse. The fourteen papers here collected were all delivered under the auspices of the B. G. Rudolph Lectureship and previously appeared in pamphlet form. However, it is convenient to have them collected together in one volume. The essays range over a wide variety of topics, but the majority are concerned with American Jewry and American Jewish history.

The volume begins with an excel-

lent but necessarily somewhat dated essay (it was written in 1963 and many substantive changes have obviously occurred since that time) by Moshe Davis on the major social, economic, religious and political factors molding world Jewry. Professor Davis gives a brief but perceptive analysis of the significance of the new Jewish settlements throughout the world since the beginning of the twentieth century; the economic restratification of the Jewish people; the movement from town to metropolitan communities; the cultural influence of the larger environment on Jewish living in open societies; the increasing varieties of Jewish identification; the ongoing tension between Jewish religious tradition and twentieth century secularism; the growing acceptance of religious difference as the most legitimate distinction between citizens in the western nations; the evolving influence of the State of Israel on world Jewry; and the change in relationships between the Israeli center and the Diaspora.

Among the other more interesting and valuable essays are those by Professor Jacob Neusner on the topic of "Politics and Theology in Tamudic Babylonia" in which he discusses his theory of the relationship between the Babylonian rabbis and the exilarchate; "The American Colonial Jew: A Study of Acculturation," a balanced and judicious account of the subject by the acknowledged and peerless dean of American Jewish historians, Professor Jacob R. Marcus; a paper on the development of the Reform movement in Congregation Beth Elohim of Charleston, South Carolina in the 1820s and 1830s by Professor Lou H. Silberman, in which the author hazards some ingenious but highly conjectural hypotheses regarding the religious and intellectual influences which motivated Isaac Harby and his associates to establish the Charles-

ton Reformed Society of Israelites; a fine account by Dr. Bertram Wallace Korn of "German-Jewish Intellectual Influences on American Jewish Life, 1824-1927," the value of which is greatly enhanced by its exhaustive footnotes; and a first-rate paper by Professor Robert Gordis on "Jewish Tradition in the Modern World: Conservation and Renewal," in which, with his usual perceptiveness and erudition, he traces the various responses to the crisis forced upon the Jews of western and central Europe by the grant of civic emancipation and the breakdown of the ghetto walls in the wake of the French Revolution, and in which he sets forth his hope for the emergence in the United States of a "voluntary community dedicated to organic Judaism."

Among other important papers are Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut's "The Sabbath as Protest: Thoughts on Work and Leisure in the Automated Society," in which the author of a pioneering manual for Sabbath observance among Reform Jews offers an analysis of the problem of work and leisure in contemporary society, as well as some prescriptions for the possible reappropriation of a meaningful Sabbath observance among non-traditional Jews; Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg's "Anti-Semitism and Jewish Uniqueness: Ancient and Contemporary," in which he presents a trenchant discussion of his position that anti-Semitism will persist in greater or lesser degree as long as Jews remain a unique people in the world and refuse completely to surrender their distinctiveness; an eloquent statement by Professor Emil L. Fackenheim on "The Human Condition After Auschwitz," in which he expresses his now familiar thesis that the fulfillment by Jewry and Jews of their unconditional obligation to survive is the one thing that provides hope and promise to the world in the

time after Auschwitz and in which he also refutes the theory that the Holocaust was simply an aberration of modern technology carried to its absurd extreme; and an interesting essay by Professor Samuel Sandmel, explaining the high degree of personal achievement among Jews in western society during the last two centuries mainly through the traditional Jewish emphasis on learning and Torah-study.

I am reluctant to transgress the ancient precept *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*. However, honesty compels me to say that probably the weakest papers in the present collection are the late Maurice Samuel's "Race, Nation and People in the Jewish Bible" and Leo W. Schwarz's "Mutations of Jewish Values in Contemporary American Fiction." Mr. Samuel, for whom I always cherished a great personal regard and whom I consider to have been one of the most effective *maggidim* and teachers of American Jewry in the twentieth century, here unfortunately delivered himself of an apologetic homily which indicates clearly his rather superficial acquaintance with the complexities of modern Biblical scholarship. And Mr. Schwarz, whose merits as an anthologist and popularizer of Jewish literature are indisputable, presented a regrettably naive discussion of a number of eminent American Jewish literary figures, including Philip Roth, Bernard Malamud, Charles Angoff, Edward Lewis Wallant, and Saul Bellow. While some of the points he made are undoubtedly valid, one is appalled by his total misunderstanding of the "message" of Saul Bellow's *Herzog* (Herzog's utterances are characterized as "piffle rather than philosophy," p. 186) and by his general pejorative assessment of the brilliant novelist.

In protest against the growing tendency of publishers to spare themselves the expense of prepar-

ing and printing indices to the volumes they issue, I must note, finally, that the value of the present volume is diminished by the fact that it does not contain an index.

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Hebrew in America: Dream and Reality

Shoharim ve-Ne'emanim (Seekers and Stalwarts: Essays and Studies on American Hebrew Literature and Culture). By JACOB KABAKOFF. Jerusalem. Rubin Mass, 1978. 372 pp.

Reviewed by STANLEY NASH

AS A YOUNG AMERICAN who has become absorbed in Hebrew literature, I find Jacob Kabakoff's scholarly analyses of American Hebraica and Hebraic Americana a unique opportunity for stirring the dual well-springs of my cultural experience. Oddly enough, the American component needs more help. The rich strains of Longfellow and Whitman have been muted for me by Vietnam and Watergate, despite the worthy efforts of the Bicentennial's media barrage. It was quaint, and yet disturbing, therefore, to have rediscovered these patriotic strains through Kabakoff's resurrection of a bygone dynamic for an Hebraic-American synthesis.

In recalling wonderful Hebrew poems about American Indian life, such as B.N. Silkiner's "Before the Tent of Timmurah" (1909), Israel Efros' "Silent Wigwams" (1933) and Efraim Lisitzky's "Dying Campfires" (1937), Kabakoff reminds us of a onetime striving to penetrate to the heart of genuine American experience and make it

one's own — by making it Hebrew. From Isaac Goldstein's 1865 acrostic poem following Lincoln's murder ("*Ashrekha Lincoln mi kamokhah, Ben melakhim vesarim me'od nisetah,*" etc.) through Y.D. Eisenstein's lively reminiscences about crossing the new Brooklyn Bridge on May 25, 1883 and celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's discovery in 1892, through Lisitzky's lyrical travelogue in search of "the sparks of Israel, the holy people, in the *galut* of remote towns throughout the expanses of America," and up to Abraham Regelson's profound poem of July 4, 1943 on "The American Flag in the Underground [Subway]," we are presented an impressive array of patriotic poems and memoirs. Above all, Kabakoff depicts the optimistic drive for indigenous American-Hebrew writing in his inspiring essays on Menahem Ribalow ("The Great Believer") and Hillel Bavli. Sadly, except for Shim'on Halkin's translations of Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" and perhaps, recently, his novels and plays, American Hebrew literature is paid little attention by Israeli Hebraists. In view of this neglect, Kabakoff's unflagging efforts to record every detail of American Hebrew creativity, both in his first volume, *Haluzei ha-Sifrut ha-Ivrit be-Amerika* (1966) and in his present collection of forty learned essays, *Shoharim ve-Ne'emanim*, take on special importance. [Respectful mention should be made, however, of Eisig Silberschlag's superb chapter on American Hebrew writers in his *From Renaissance to Renaissance*, volume I (1973).]

It would be misleading to assess American Hebrew writing as entirely, or even largely, sanguine. I might want to come away from Kabakoff's volume recalling the uplifting absence of cynicism which once existed in the hearts of a few

in this land. Kabakoff (although a "great believer" like his teachers, Bavli and Ribalow), however, provides us with a longer balance-sheet of cynicism and satire. Gershon Rosenzweig's refrain in his poem "Amerika" (1892), "*Ammi-rek-hu*" [my (American-Jewish) people is empty], establishes a tone of disappointment which ranges from the humor of Rosenzweig (studied in Kabakoff's first volume) and Avraham Kotlar's biting parody of the mores of American-Jewish "Yankees" to the poet Isaac Rabinovich's exceptionally powerful and moving letters of despair "cursing Columbus," which Kabakoff salvaged from the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem.

Through his many tenacious archival expeditions, Kabakoff has also fleshed out for us the personalities and contacts of such American Hebrew notables as the bibliophile and adventurer, Efraim Deinard, the pioneering scholar of medieval poetry, Israel Davidson, and the renowned translator of the Bible into Yiddish, Yehoash. Were it only for Kabakoff's wonderful characterization of Deinard and his list of thirty-seven questions which this "mighty traveler" [*"ha-nose'a ha-ADIR (A. DeInARd)"*] proposed to use in polling statistics about Jewish communities far and wide for a projected volume, "Trip Around the World, we might have said *"day-yenu."* Similarly, Kabakoff's analysis of Rawidowicz's writings are a welcome elucidation and synthesis of that prodigious author's contribution and a reflection of Kabakoff's own range and depth. The volume, as a whole, is a treasure trove for the study of neglected byways of Hebrew literature and of American Jewish history.

STANLEY NASH is an associate professor of Hebrew at HUC-JIR, New York.



Robert Forget

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